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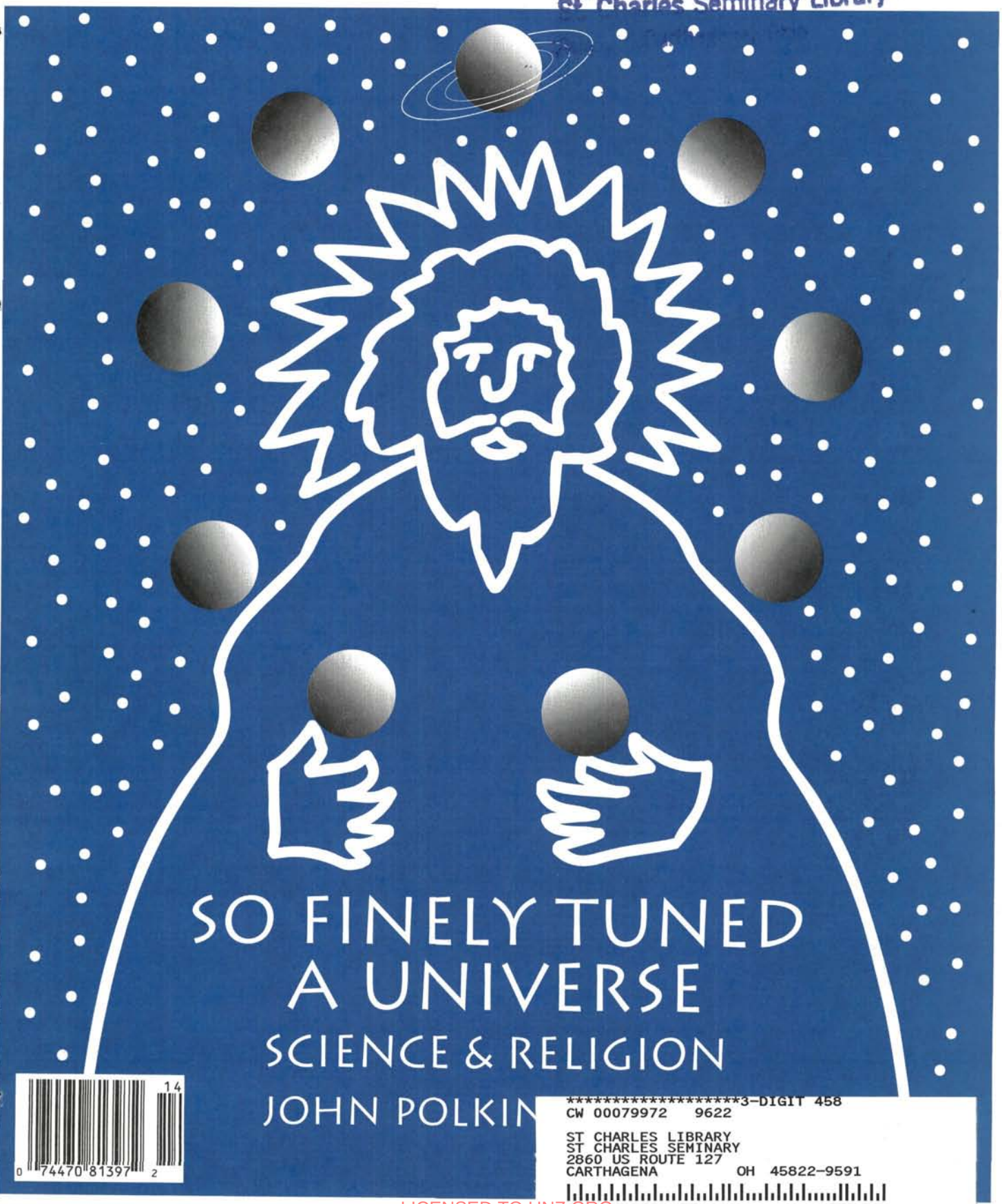

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To the Editors

First fruit of reflection

You have done the church in this country an enormous service by printing Archbishop John R. Quinn's address, "The Exercise of the Primacy" [July 12]. It is, in the truest sense of an overused phrase, beyond praise. That it comes from an American bishop is reason for legitimate national pride.

Given the political realities of church life today, such a talk could have been delivered *only* by one of the handful of "maverick" prelates (in which case it would have lacked credibility) *or* by a retired bishop. Cynics will speculate that it will make the Holy See more reluctant to grant early retirement to archbishops. Quinn's decades of loyal service, and the cogency of his arguments, suggest that such cynics are wrong....

Speaking in Oxford, Quinn several times cited Newman to good effect. Another Oxford man is also relevant: Charles Gore, bishop of Oxford from 1911 to 1918 and a respected scholar. Gore resigned his see in 1919, saying in explanation, "Episcopacy is just carrying on." Now that Archbishop Quinn no longer has to keep the ecclesial engine running, he has time to reflect. His address is a fruit of this reflection, hopefully not yet the full harvest.

REV. JOHN JAY HUGHES
Saint Louis, Mo.

Let's hear an echo

Hooray for Archbishop Quinn! At last an American bishop of stature speaks out in a thoughtful dissertation about needed reforms of the curia and for restoration of the principles of collegiality and subsidiarity, so long ignored in Rome and so glaringly avoided in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Where are the other bishops? The specific reforms Quinn suggests are both possible and practical. Is there no other U.S. bishop with the guts to speak out? Time will tell.

ROBERT M. ROWDEN, M.D.
San Rafael, Calif.

An echo is heard

You have served the church well in publishing the full text of the remarkable lecture given by Archbishop John R. Quinn. Both you and the archbishop deserve warm appreciation. He has spoken with rich theological insight and no little courage.

I read the text of the lecture in the context of my participation in every session of the Second Vatican Council. The archbishop has made the council come alive for me, and no doubt for many others. In my reading there came to mind a phrase often repeated during the council: "*Ecclesia semper reformanda*": The church is always in need of reformation!

Thirty years have passed. Pope John Paul II is now the third successor of John XXIII, who initiated the council. Archbishop Quinn states his personal reverence and admiration for the pope and his commitment to the pope and to papal primacy. I join him in those sentiments; the primacy is essential to the church and to her efforts toward Christian unity.

The reforms offered by the archbishop flow from the teachings of Vatican II. Among them is the need to put a true collegiality into practice, the bond of union of bishops as members of a collegiate body together with the pope. In practice it sometimes appears that a bishop is the mere legate of the pope, whereas in truth a bishop has legitimate authority in his own right, and joins with the other members of the College of Bishops with the pope as its head for the care of the universal church.

Another needed reform mentioned in the address regards the Synod of Bishops, established by Vatican II to give the bishops of the world the responsibility, together with the pope, of implementing the council's teachings throughout the world, limiting the power of the Roman curia. This has not been successful.

The archbishop also cites the failure of the church to address urgent concerns of the People of God, among them the shortage of priests, the celibacy of the clergy, the role of women in the church, the ordination of women.

Among these issues needing further dialogue and discussion can be found many that some of us bishops had listed as urgent in a document submitted to a committee studying the restructuring of the [U.S.] National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

MOST REV. CHARLES A. BUSWELL
Pueblo, Colo.

The writer is the former bishop of Pueblo.

Applause & questions

Archbishop John R. Quinn's address, as published in your pages, deserves loud and sustained applause. But bothersome questions still dog the messenger. I raise them with the same love and respect that obviously pervade Archbishop Quinn's lecture.

Archbishop Quinn goes out of his way to insist that his critique of the papal and curial *modus operandi* is a response to the pope's request for dialogue on how the Petrine primacy can be exercised in a manner "open to a new situation." The implication might be drawn that such criticism is justified only when invited. But is it not an episcopal and theological responsibility, whether invited or not, to critique papal and curial procedures whenever these procedures create an obstacle to church teaching and unity?

Next, Archbishop Quinn admits that "one can only advance the need for new forms [of the exercise of primacy] if the past or current forms are evaluated as inadequate." This inadequacy has been obvious to many for

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COMMONWEAL

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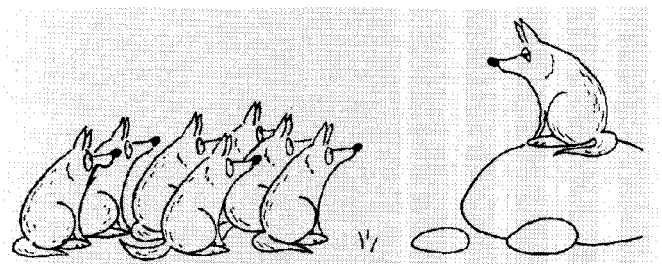

"There's got to be a more intelligent way of choosing a leader than by who has the biggest teeth!"

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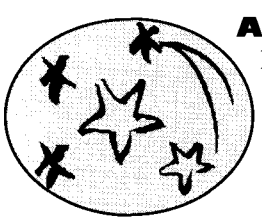

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many years. (*See*, for example, the statement of 431 members of the Catholic Theological Society of America, "Do Not Extinguish the Spirit," *Origins*, December 27, 1990.) Why does Archbishop Quinn raise it only now? Does it have anything to do with his retired status?

Third, Archbishop Quinn has challenged not a specific decision of the Holy See, but the very "way in which these decisions are reached and implemented." This is surely a much more radical challenge than questioning any particular decision. Yet, as archbishop of San Francisco, Quinn would not allow such questions to be raised. He banned me (and others, including a fellow bishop) from lecturing in the Vatican II program at Saint Patrick's Seminary (Menlo Park) for questioning far less radical matters, for example, the intrinsically evil character of contraception. In itself, the ban is a trifling matter, and I mention it in no spirit of personal pique. But credibility demands consistency. If Archbishop Quinn were still an active ordinary, would he not have to exclude himself for speaking out as he did at Oxford?

Finally, Archbishop Quinn rightly states that "raising such questions [contraception, ordination of women, general absolution, priestly celibacy] respectfully and honestly is in reality an expression of both faith and loyalty." If this is true of bishops, is it not equally true of theologians and others?

As I noted, applaud the message but press the messenger.

RICHARD A. McCORMICK, S.J.
Notre Dame, Ind.

A crafty pope?

Publishing Archbishop Quinn's speech was helpful, but nothing in it surprised me, because I believe that John Paul II means what he says about Christian unity at the beginning of the third millennium.

Consider: If the pope expects to change the way of being pope, without weakening papal primacy, would he not prepare the way by:

- Publication of a universal catechism;
- Filling bishops' chairs with conservative men;
- Making doctrinal statements more conservative than really necessary to protect the essentials of faith;
- Making public admissions of and apologies for past mistakes by the church; and
- Soliciting speeches like Quinn's lecture at Oxford?

ROBERT E. MANLEY
Cincinnati, Ohio

A heroic pope?

Archbishop Quinn's lecture is a penetrating and nuanced analysis of the Petrine ministry in the church in the context of the "new situation" of our times. But in all this, the unsung hero is Pope John Paul II. It took much courage and humility for him to open this Pandora's box (can of worms?). After all, he is the bearer of the 2,000-year-old Petrine ministry; he carries it in a fragile vase; and has the most to lose.

It is John Paul II who humbly asks for help from non-Catholic Christians to "engage in a patient and fraternal dialogue" on ways of exercising the primacy, so that "we may seek—together, of course, a service of love recognized by all concerned." The pope is pleading on his knees, for goodness' sake; there is not a trace of arrogance or condescension in his words. Powerful stuff!

GINO DALPIAZ, C.S.
Stone Park, Ill.

The view from below

The notation in the table of contents describing Archbishop Quinn's article—"John Paul II has asked for suggestions for reform of the papal ministry—an archbishop responds"—reminded me (even before I read the article) of a saying by my late pastor, Msgr. John J. O'Sullivan:

"Parishioners think they know better than their priests.

"Priests think they know better than their bishops.

"One can only guess what occupies bishops' thoughts."

I suppose the Holy Father wanted suggestions via *Commonweal*.

ROBERT R. BEUTZ
Rosemount, Minn.

An unsound complaint

Archbishop Quinn's complaint against the Vatican for rejecting the feminist-language translation of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* is unjustified. Most U.S. women are using the approved version without difficutly, though some feminists have griped, often in a ludicrous manner, revealing their own biases and silly pretentions rather than anything substantial. It is depressing that bishops like Quinn are so weak-minded as to accept such posturing.

But U.S. bishops have shown the poorest of judgments in many matters: in introducing the new liturgy to American Catholics, in approving the 1970 New American Bible translation of the New Testament (replaced completely in 1987), in ignoring sexual issues in and out of marriage, in losing $30 million in an ill-conceived television network, in tolerating, until the Vatican intervened, Charles Curran's major dissent from Catholic moral teaching. Quinn's championing of feminist language is as errant as these examples and deserves to be refuted and ignored.

JAY MILLER
Waterford, Mich.

An answer to prayers

We readers owe thanks to *Commonweal* for publishing the full text of Archbishop Quinn's Oxford lecture, one of the most important statements on church reform in modern times....It is doubtful that we will ever have a better chance to understand the difficulty faced by our sepa-

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Israel: security vs. peace

Israeli politics has an edge and a capacity for going over the edge which undermine its steady fix on security for the people and the land of Israel. By an extremely close vote (50.4 percent) in May, the security issue made Benjamin Netanyahu Israel's new prime minister and gave the Knesset a distinctly right-leaning group of legislators strongly flavored with Orthodox members, whose religious agenda is already renewing dissension within the Jewish community.

But it was politics as usual—over the edge—immediately after the election, as Mr. Netanyahu bargained to form a cabinet from this conservative coalition divided by competing religious, economic, and political outlooks. Without doubt, the most troubling appointment was that of Ariel Sharon to head a new infrastructure ministry. Mr. Sharon was defense minister during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, which included the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, and is an adamant opponent of Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. He has quickly seized his new authority and ordered the expansion of roads and bridges to Israeli settlements on the West Bank and the Golan Heights. His initiative along with Mr. Netanyahu's decision to lift the ban on new construction in the settlements is likely to provoke renewed hostilities with the Palestinians.

Israeli opinion polls and Mr. Netanyahu's narrow victory suggest that the electorate was not primarily voting against the peace process, but against the pace at which Labor Prime Minister Simon Peres was pursuing it and out of fear that the Palestinians were not truly committed to peace. What an irony if a bad case of nerves ushers in a self-fulfilling prophecy. How soon before Israel finds itself facing the opposite dilemma: a Netanyahu government so fixed on security that the peace process will be destroyed?

During his July visit to Washington, the American-educated Mr. Netanyahu was warmly received in Congress, but did little to assure President Bill Clinton or anyone else on how the peace process would survive. Netanyahu has said that there are no preconditions for peace; he also says that the Golan Heights will never be returned to Syria; that there will be no Palestinian capital in Jerusalem nor an autonomous Palestinian entity in Gaza and on the West Bank. The Israeli army's long-delayed withdrawal from Hebron is yet again postponed and the confiscation of Palestinian property in Jerusalem continues.

What does he mean then by no preconditions? New construction in West Bank settlements along with Sharon's road-building schemes will steadily remove the incentives and the ability of Yasir Arafat and the Palestinian Authority to abide by the Oslo Accords. Mr. Arafat may not have done everything necessary to reassure Israelis that he understood their security interests, but recall that the most egregious breach of Israeli security this past year was the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a right-wing Israeli who probably voted for Mr. Netanyahu.

The failure of the peace accords would be a fateful tragedy certainly for the Israelis and the Palestinians. But other nations too have a vital interest in peace, if for no other reason than that the malignant terrorism nurtured

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in the Middle East continues to claim so many victims.

Though Mr. Netanyahu declares himself a pragmatist, he is a pragmatist playing with fire. Mr. Sharon has previously shown himself to be uncontrollable; West Bank settlers have previously parlayed their irredentist program into government policy; the Palestinians have shown that though they cannot win neither will they be defeated. Mr. Netanyahu's fellow-pragmatist President Bill Clinton cannot be counted on in an election year to firmly resist these moves and threatened moves. But he should. Though every nation has an interest in a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement, the United States, with its billions of dollars in subventions to Israel, is the only one with real leverage. Those levers should be pulled before rather than after the Oslo Accords have been subverted.

In the meantime, the 49.6 percent of Israelis who did not vote for Mr. Netanyahu must force his government to recognize an essential truth: Real security will be destroyed by making it an absolute.

In keeping with *Commonweal*'s usual schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue will be dated September 13.

OF SEVERAL MINDS

SIDNEY CALLAHAN

DEAR MR. CLINTON

I'm returning your veto

I am a prolife Democrat who's going to defect from my party. Come November, I plan to vote for Bob Dole. And how, pray tell, does an unreconstructed Humphrey-McGovern "pinko," "socialist," "big government," "bleeding heart," "peacenik" Democrat in favor of a preferential option for the poor, come to such a pass? Through a bout of moral indignation, that's how. My multiple disillusionments with Bill Clinton have boiled over.

When Clinton vetoed the partial-birth abortion ban, something in me snapped. "That's it," I said, "I've had it. There's no way this hand's going to push a lever to help elect this fellow a second time." Even my admiration for Hillary is dissolving fast. It's not only Whitewater but the fact that after Bill's veto she was photographed smiling happily at a luncheon thrown for her by her friends at Emily's List, which raises funds for women political candidates (but only if they're prochoice). Soon thereafter the country was treated to Hillary's musings over various new baby-adoption options. Cynical? Opportunistic? Or another sincere but tone-deaf judgment call? Does it take a whole village to save these spin doctors from themselves?

I am also affronted by Clinton's cavalier rejection of the gay community in announcing he will sign the Defense of Marriage Act. (Yes, I'm a feminist prolifer who's for gay rights and in favor of same-sex marriage, but I don't have space here to argue this one.) At least gays, unlike the unborn, can lobby for their own potential futures. But can welfare mothers and the poor children Clinton's abandoning in another part of the forest manage to defend themselves?

In Clinton's current efforts to pander to the prevailing winds and out-tough the macho-Republicans there appears little hope that he will reverse course. Nor is he likely to become any less gung ho for capital punishment or suddenly vow to renounce violent military interventions around the world. In his eye-on-the-main-chance mode of operation whatever seems to fly will be adopted. And whatever groups (or old friends) or principles that have to be abandoned along the way will be sacrificed with dispatch.

Enough already. In a desperate act of protest I'm ready to cast my first vote for a Republican presidential candidate. Contrary to superstitious belief, my hand will not fall off. With Dole at least I can get one important piece of my consistent ethic-of-life agenda championed; the unborn may have a bit more chance for some protection.

Of course, Dole may lose by a landslide. Who am I to predict political elections? I actually thought McGovern could win since everyone I knew voted for him.

In any event, if enough distressed people (Catholics and others united for the separation of infanticide and the state) engage in a protest vote maybe the next Democratic candidate will be more receptive to the prolife message.

Then again Dole might win and have enough legislative skill and party strength to get a few moderate government reforms effected. Once in office he ought to have enough clout to control the mean-spirited fanatics in his own party. Why should America be hell-bent (literally) on returning to the law of the jungle and the survival of the fittest?

Finally I suppose when facing the choice between Clinton and Dole there's no avoiding the age-cum-character question. On balance I admire Done's generation and the cultural forces that shaped his era more than I like the confusion and self-indulgence that produced the sixties reformers. And obviously to possess Dole's particular World War II formative experiences you have to be old. I hope Americans will be aware of the damage done by ageism and not judge the candidates by age alone. True, you may have more energy when you're young but at any period of life the crucial issue becomes how you focus your energy. Health comes from healthy habits.

Other habitual choices in life deter-

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mine your moral character. Unfortunately, to sentimentally aspire to goodness, wisdom, and greatness is not the same thing as actually becoming wise and good. Moral rhetoric alone won't deliver the self-discipline and principled practice necessary to achieve virtue.

I'm afraid that in the moral virtue department the Clintons may be in for more embarrassments. So then there's the old question to be faced of whether private sexual indiscretions produce enough toxic waste to taint a person's public political performance? Mostly yes, I'd say, but occasionally not. Certainly abuse by powerful men of their privilege in the pursuit of sexual pleasure morally stinks; making exceptions for one's self and cutting corners become addictive. Moral self-deception in our leaders present the gravest dangers for the rest of us in the country.

Well, who knows how this particular end-of-the-millennium drama is going to play itself out? Comedy, tragedy, farce? Right now it's taking enough energy for me to cast a heretofore unthinkable Republican vote in November; I'm no longer going to be held captive by the home team. □

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OF SEVERAL MINDS

DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.

MOVING UP THE LADDER

How equality reinforces inequality

Throughout the long course of human history, systems of social inequality have run into trouble because of self-defeating prejudices. Talented members of the lower classes have been refused admission to the higher classes. This is foolish of the higher classes; for if they had co-opted the talented few from below, these talents would serve the interests of those above. As it is, these rejected talents have been forced to remain in the lower classes, providing leadership, organization, and ideas. As a result, eventually the lower classes become formidable rivals to their social betters.

This was all explained nearly a hundred years ago by the Italian economist-sociologist Vilfredo Pareto in his theory of the "circulation of elites."

In the United States we may congratulate ourselves on having solved this problem at last. Since our higher classes are largely devoid of irrational prejudice, they welcome talented recruits no matter where these may have come from. Were your parents poor? Are you black? Are you female? Do you come from any group that has a history of social inferiority? No matter. As long as you've got what it takes to function at society's higher levels, the door is open to you.

Once you enter the privileged classes, your loyalty switches. You now belong to the new class, not your class of origin. Oh, you may retain some nostalgic attachment to that original class, which is all very well at the level of sentiment; but at the practical level this means little or nothing. Your job, your income, your lifestyle, your social respectability—all these depend on putting your talents and education at the service of the higher classes.

Nothing comes easily in life, Junior. If you want something, you usually have to ring for it.

As a result our lower classes are drained of their best talent. They lack leadership, they are unorganized, they are inarticulate; all of which adds up to this: that they are powerless. Consequently our higher classes are free to live very comfortable lives—good jobs, good incomes, good neighborhoods, good homes, good cars, good clothes, good travel, and (most important of all, since this is how privilege is passed on to the next generation) good schools for their kids—without having to fear that the lower classes will someday rise up in fury and take it all away.

In the Middle Ages the lords of the land had to worry about an occasional *jacquerie*. This is because they had not developed a system for co-opting the peasant elite; and if anything is a universal truth it is this, that an oppressed peasantry provided with internal leadership will eventually burn a few manor houses and slit a few throats.

Of course our lower classes, or at least the lower grades among them, are quite capable of slitting throats. Their rates of criminal violence are absolutely appalling. But our higher classes have arranged things so that these folks will stay at home and confine themselves to slitting one another's throats. The rest of us have moved to suburban enclaves, where we are distant from the shabbiness, the disorder, and the violence of lower-class life, and therefore relatively safe.

Now, we are not supposed to mention any of this in public. (Please burn this essay as soon as you read it.) We are supposed to pretend that we are terribly interested in promoting equality in America; whereas under the guise of promoting equality we reinforce our system of inequality.

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For instance, affirmative action for blacks has done little to improve life among blacks generally. In fact, among blacks in the lower classes the quality of life has deteriorated badly in the decades in which affirmative action has been in effect. But what affirmative action has done, and done very effectively, is to co-opt talented blacks into the higher classes.

Likewise affirmative action for women has done little to help women generally, as the deteriorated life of women in the lower half of society demonstrates. But affirmative action has assured that talented women will get better jobs and higher pay, thereby removing any temptation they may have to become leaders of the modern equivalent of a *jacquerie*.

By way of objection it might be pointed out that affirmative action in the academic world has led to a profusion of feminist scholars who have quite an insurrectionist tone about them. They devote their very considerable energies to exposing and denouncing what they say is history's oldest conspiracy, the patriarchal conspiracy of all men against all women. Yes, but antipatriarchalism doesn't really offend anyone (except a few Tridentine Catholics). You can denounce patriarchy to your heart's content and you won't ruffle a feather in the higher classes. The conspiracy of men against women is old hat. The chief conspiracy today, as always, is that of the higher classes versus the lower. As long as you leave that alone, you are free to blow off steam about other conspiracies. Indeed we encourage you to do so, since the patriarchy thesis has the merit of drawing attention away from the long and embarrassing history of how the upper classes have tried to find a formula for keeping the lower classes under control. It has the further merit of underlining the moral inferiority of our lower classes; for if patriarchal notions continue to thrive anywhere today, it is among them.

One of the most effective ways of keeping attention away from class divisions is by jumping aboard the multiculturalism bandwagon. As long as we can keep the privileged classes worried about whether American society is being fair to (let's say) the Pakistanis in our midst, we can prevent them from having a bad conscience about how brutally unfair our society is to its native-born lower orders. By focusing on racial and ethnic divisions, we draw attention away from class divisions. Focusing on racial and ethnic divisions also exacerbates them, especially among the lower classes, thereby creating a further obstacle to lower-class unity.

Our system isn't perfect yet. When it is finally perfected, half of all Americans will live in decrepit inner cities while the other half will live in very expensive homes in exurban subdivisions; and from time to time raiding parties from the subdivisions will descend on the inner cities and kidnap all the promising ten-year-olds. □

Victor Ferkiss

GREEN WITH DISGUST

It's Nader for me

I confess. I have been a political junkie almost all of my life. Some people have a passion for art or music, literature or philosophy, fine wines or lustful sex. I understand and sympathize, but I get my kicks largely from politics.

Like most addicts, I started young. When most kids my age were reading comic books, I was memorizing the names of the then ninety-six U.S. Senators. In high school, I was going to political meetings. My political views were largely determined by my socioeconomic background—urban lower-middle class, with the accent on the lower. I was born and raised primarily in New York City. But it was not the urbane and sophisticated New York most think of. It was the real New York. The social critic Norman Podhoretz once wrote that the longest journey in the world was the subway ride from Brooklyn to Manhattan. I grew up in Queens.

War is the father of all things, some ancient Greek wrote. I was one of millions of Americans raised to real middle-class status after World War II by the G.I. Bill, and this provided greater scope for my junkie activities. When I was a grad student at Berkeley I engaged in my first real political work, which showed a special facet of my political addiction—a quasi-romantic affinity for lost causes. I was a precinct captain for Helen Gahagan Douglas in her fight for the U.S. Senate against Richard Nixon. You all know the results, immediate and long-range.

In the long years since, I have attended local and state conventions, rung doorbells, watched polls, registered voters, distributed literature, and worked phone banks in California, Maryland, and New Mexico. Though I was on the board of directors of Americans for Democratic Action in the early sixties, most of my work was that of an anonymous foot soldier in the political trenches. Like most other drugs, the drug of politics is a harsh mistress; once embraced, she is almost impossible to escape.

During all these years, I never strayed far from the Democratic party which, I felt, best represented my origins. True, I cast my first presidential vote in 1948 for the Socialist party candidate, Norman Thomas, and wrote in the name of Eugene McCarthy not once but twice on the presidential ballot. On rare occasions I might support a Republican for state or local office, or even for Congress, but I was never tempted by the heresy of voting for a Republican presidential candidate. My political history was one of loyalty as well as addiction. Now in 1996 I suddenly find myself on the verge of remission, and the pangs of withdrawl are agonizing.

In my lifetime I've been in direct contact with political figures as diverse as Jeanne Kirkpatrick and Ted Kennedy, but

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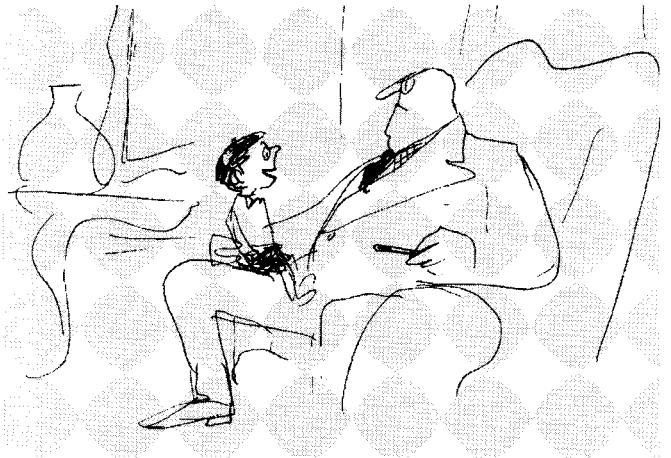

"When I grow up, I'm going to join Nader's Raiders."

Dole and Clinton I've never seen in person, even if our paths have in some sense crossed. Though I was a lowly rifleman in the same battalion as Bob Dole in Italy, and probably not more than a thousand yards away on that fateful April morning when he received the wounds that changed his life and did much to form his character forever, somehow we have never met. Bill Clinton spent four years at Georgetown while I was teaching political science there, but apparently was never in any of my classes, and I can't recall ever having met him either.

Like most Americans then, all of what I know about either of them comes through the media or by rumor. Frankly, I don't like most of what I see. Both Dole and Clinton strike me as purer political animals than most, pragmatists who may have different ideological centers of gravity but who are more than willing to sacrifice any convictions they hold on the altar of political expediency. On the so-called "social" issues, Dole and Clinton are fighting to see who can call for more prisons and police to "solve" the real but over-hyped "crime problem." Clinton's record on abortion may be abominable, but all the signs are that the Republican party is leaning in his direction, even to abandoning the rhetoric with which Reagan and Bush conned the prolife movement. The future of abortion will be decided by public opinion and the courts, not by whether Dole or Clinton is elected.

On economic issues, the differences between them are largely based on the rhetoric of political tradition. Neither has shown any real understanding of what ails the country and what to do about it and both are, in effect, spokesmen for corporate America. Despite the visceral unwillingess of most of the business community to fully embrace someone with a Democatic label, Clinton is probably more effective in their interest because he is not only more economically literate than Dole but has precluded any spokesman for the traditional Democratic working class from arising to real power in the party.

Over the years I have come to regard environmental issues—resource depletion, pollution, population growth—as the real keys to the future of both the United States and the planet as a whole. When it comes to the environment, Dole doesn't have a clue. Clinton's record in Arkansas was horrible, his first years as president mediocre. At present, scenting public revulsion at the attempted excesses of the Republican Congress, he is trying to make it an issue. But most environmentalists do not trust him and with good reason: His heart is not in it, just as it is not really in any issue except reelection.

I ask you: What is a poor junkie to do? One could of course have recourse to the maxim, "Think globally, act locally." Heaven knows that New Mexico, where I have lived for the last half decade, is a fertile field for action. Essentially a third-world state with pockets of sophistication and high tech, it has a political system which combines the absurd and sinister with the simply archaic, and is still sufficiently small in population that one might make an impact. But once you have tried the heavy drug of national politics, the softer drugs of state and local, though they can provide a rush, have limited appeal.

Most of my life I have operated on the prudential principle that when faced with two evils, chose the lesser. Politics is, of course, largely a matter of lesser evils. But one always has deep in one's psyche the desire to find something really good. My head tells me that faced with a choice of Dole or Clinton, I should support the latter as the lesser evil. But my heart tells me something else.

The Green party is now a legal major party in New Mexico. If they put Ralph Nader on the presidental ballot, I will probably vote for him. Presidential elections only occur every four years, after all, and though my health still seems reasonably good, I don't know how many more elections God will keep me around for. This may well be my last presidential election, and this time—at least—I don't want to waste my vote. □

Victor Ferkiss, *the author of* Nature, Technology, and Society: Cultural Roots of the Current Environmental Crisis *(New York University Press), is a member of both the Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs and the Planning and Zoning Commission of the Village of Corrales, New Mexico.*

Bernard Bergonzi

WHO'S TONY BLAIR?

Maggie Thatcher in reverse

There is a general assumption in Britain that by next spring Tony Blair, leader of the Labour party, will be prime minister. May 1997 is the latest possible date at which the general election can be held. The Conservatives, tired, accident-prone, and divided after seventeen years in office, have been trailing far behind Labour in the opinion polls and losing heavily in local

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elections. If Labour gets in, the result will be greeted with a combination of relief, curiosity, and unease, and the greatest curiosity will be about Tony Blair.

Blair is an impressive but mysterious figure, whose career and character are oddly reminiscent of those of Margaret Thatcher. When she became leader in opposition in 1975, she had held only minor cabinet office and had no solid, identifiable body of support in the Conservative party. Electing a woman leader was extraordinarily risky, but Thatcher boldly seized the opportunity. She had a strong sense of what she wanted to do, which was nothing less than to transform the party and give it a new direction, and to this end she brought immense courage and that indispensable element of political success, luck. The luck has been conspicuous in Blair's career. He, too, has got to the top from nowhere in particular. Like many prominent people in the Labour party, past and present, Blair is of Scottish origin. But he speaks with a standard English accent, and was educated at a posh Edinburgh "public" (that is, private) school and at Oxford.

He is a slim, good-looking man, surprisingly youthful at forty-three; when he was first famous, his fawn-like countenance gained him the nickname "Bambi," but this was dropped when it became evident what a tough political animal Blair is. He is a lawyer by profession, and is a sharp debater though not a powerful orator. He has what all politicians need today, a neat way with sound-bites. Blair has been in Parliament since 1983, sitting for an industrial constituency in the North East of England with a solid Labour majority. How he got his seat in Parliament was the first example of his luck; the local party needed a new candidate and had all but decided on a former MP of marked left-wing views. But Blair persuaded them to see him at the eleventh hour and made such a good impression that they adopted him. His next piece of luck was of the grimmer kind that comes from stepping into a dead man's shoes.

After Labour lost the 1992 election, which they had seemed to have a good chance of winning, the leader, Neil Kinnock, a decent but limited Welshman, stepped down. The new leader was John Smith, a popular, avuncular Scot who had held office in the Labour government of the 1970s; he was another decent man, though a product of the machine politics of the Scottish Labour party. Smith was a cautious reformer, but his main aim was to keep the party united. In 1994 he died suddenly of a heart attack. Blair, who was in the Shadow Cabinet as spokesman on home affairs, seized his chance. He fought a brilliantly successful campaign and was elected leader by a convincing majority.

Nevertheless, Blair was mistrusted by many on the traditional left, especially when, as leader, he made it clear how much he wanted to change and modernize the party. The Labour party has always been a very broad church, ranging from members who would be at home in Clinton's Democratic party to covert (and occasionally overt) Marxists. The close connection with the trade unions was part of its founding tradition, but increasingly unpopular with the voters. Smith had made moves to loosen it and Blair continued them. But his main accomplishment was to persuade the party to remove a clause in its constitution, dating back to 1918, which stated its aim as the public ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. The Left was very committed to this aspiration, as representing the Socialist ideal, but the mainstream of the party found it something of an embarrassment and treated it as obsolete and irrelevant. Nevertheless, as long as the clause was there the opponents of Labour could allege that its ultimate aim was to nationalize everything in sight. Smith had been against disrupting the party by changing the constitution, but Blair, with characteristic courage, insisted and won the issue on a ballot of the membership. There were practical, electoral motives for the change, but his basic motive seems to have been the moral conviction that one shouldn't say things one doesn't believe to be true.

Blair is still ready to talk about "socialism" but treats it as a potent myth or metaphor, rather like a radical theologian describing God. He is happy to accept competition and the market economy, but in the context of a more humane and responsible society. He is much more a left-wing Christian Democrat on the European model than a Socialist or even a Social Democrat. He believes in marriage and the family, wants to help the poor to help themselves, and thinks that rights are accompanied by responsibilities; these stances antagonize some on the left as much as his revisionist ideas about the economy. Blair could be described as a communitarian, to invoke that fashionable, loose term; he has written, "I joined the Labour party out of a conviction that individuals prosper in an inclusive and active civil society." He is a practicing Anglican who is said to play the guitar at services in his local church, and his wife is a Catholic. She is a high-powered, highly paid lawyer; she is not politically active, but one is inevitably reminded of that other famous pair of lawyers, the Clintons. Tony Blair, though, has no hint of scandal in his past life; if there were any, the indefatigably malicious British press would certainly have unearthed it by now. He will face a bitter and probably dirty struggle during the coming months; the Conservative party, however unpopular at the moment, remains an efficient machine dedicated to holding on to power, and most of the national newspapers are pro-Conservative; they are currently annoyed with the government, but they are likely to rally round as the election approaches.

Blair looks like the probable winner but nothing is certain in politics, and the electorate may still atavistically vote Conservative yet again, whatever their present discontents. If elected, Blair will have to fight on two fronts, against the Conservatives in opposition and again the Left in his own party. But he is a remarkable politician, still young, and, like Margaret Thatcher, he could dominate the parliamentary scene for a long time to come. □

Bernard Bergonzi, *recently retired from Warwick University, will be writing an occasional letter from England for* Commonweal.

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SO FINELY TUNED A UNIVERSE

Of atoms, stars, quanta & God

John Polkinghorne

I have spent most of my working life as a theoretical physicist and all of my consciously remembered life as part of the worshiping and believing community of the church. I want to take absolutely seriously the possibility of religious belief in a scientific age. I believe that science and religion are friends and not foes. To see that, we must recognize two things:

1. We must take account of what science has to tell us about the pattern and history of the physical world. Of course, science itself can no more dictate to religion what it is to believe than religion can prescribe for science what the outcome of its inquiry is to be. The two disciplines are concerned with the exploration of different aspects of human experience: in the one case, our impersonal encounter with a physical world that we transcend; in the other, our personal encounter with the One who transcends us. They use different methods: in the one case, the experimental procedure of putting matters to the test; in the other, the commitment of trust which must underlie all personal encounter, whether among ourselves or with the reality of God. They ask different questions: in the one case, how things happen, by what process? In the other: why things happen, to what purpose?

Though these are two different questions the ways we answer them must bear some consonant relationship to each other. The fact that we now know that the universe did not spring into being ready made a few thousand years ago but that it has evolved over a period of 15 billion years from its fiery origin in the Big Bang, does not abolish Christian talk of the world as God's creation, but it certainly modifies certain aspects of that discourse.

2. We must understand that religious belief, just like scientific belief, is *motivated* understanding of the ways things are. Of course, a religious stance involves faith, just as a scientific investigation starts by commitment to the interrogation of the physical world from a chosen point of view. But faith is not a question of shutting one's eyes, gritting one's teeth, and believing the impossible. It involves a leap, but a leap into the light rather than the dark. It is open to the possibility of correction, as God's ways and will become more clearly known.

John Polkinghorne, *whose latest book is reviewed on page 23, is the president of Queens' College, the University of Cambridge, and an ordained priest in the Church of England. This essay has been adapted from a lecture given at Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut.*

Scientists do not ask "Is that reasonable?" as if we knew beforehand what the world is going to be like. They know that when we move into regimes far away from everyday experience, all sorts of surprising things can happen. Common sense will not be the measure of all things. We are not clever enough to see very far ahead. Therefore, the scientific question is "What makes you think this might be the case?" That is a different question from "Is that reasonable?" and a question that is open to the possibility of enlarging our understanding of how things are.

Let me give an example of the surprises that the physical world has proved to have in store for us. If I were to say, "Bill is at home and he is either drunk or sober," you would expect either to find Bill at home drunk or to find him at home sober. It seems trivial and obvious; the learned would say that you have used the distributive law of logic. Oddly enough, the corresponding argument applied to a quantum entity like an electron does not work. The elusive, unpicturable quantum world is found to obey a different kind of logic. May the same not also be true of encounter with divine reality?

My Christian belief in this age of science has to be motivated belief, based on evidence that I can point to. The center of my faith lies in my encounter with the figure of Jesus Christ, as I meet him in the Gospels, in the witness of the church, and in the sacraments. That is the heart of my Christian faith and hope. Yet, at a subsidiary but supportive level, there are also hints of God's presence which arise from our scientific knowledge. The actual way we answer the question "How?" points on to the question "Why?" so that science by itself is found not to be sufficiently intellectually satisfying. I want to sketch out these encouragements to religion.

A characteristic of scientific thought is the drive for synthesis. We want to have as unified an understanding as we possibly can. That is the drive behind the present activity in particle physics, which is looking for a grand unified theory—a GUT, as scientists say in our acronymic way. So, it's the instinct of a scientist to seek as economic and as extensive an understanding of the world as possible.

I believe that the grandest unified theory that you could ever conceivably reach is a theological understanding of the world. Theology is the drive to find the most profound and comprehensive understanding of our encounter with reality.

If we're going to look for such a total theory, there are

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Peter Warshaw

Anaximenes

Only Miletos of the cities that make
the modern world can boast a man
the like of Anaximenes.
Old, perhaps, our master and friend
showed us how the very stars
in their crown circle round the head
of our tired world, to disappear
behind the wild peaks at the edge
of earth, now shining now dark.
And he taught us foremost of all comes air,
life's everything whose simple breath
we breathe and whose transparent arms
hold in place the moon and the sun.

Old in the service of philosophy,
truth in full measure his, how
shall we believe him now, who tells
us knowledge brings sadness; wisdom, sorrow in its
wake?

basically two alternative strategies, for if we are looking for a total explanation we won't get it for nothing. Every explanation depends upon certain basic unexplained assumptions. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*, nothing comes from nothing. That's true intellectually. Any theory of the world proceeds from some set of basic assumptions. One way to look at the world is to take the brute fact of the physical world as your starting point. That's how somebody like David Hume would proceed. Start with the brute fact of matter as your unexplained basis. But another way to proceed is to start with the brute fact (if that's the word to use) of God. In other words, one can appeal to the will of an agent, the purpose of a Creator, as the basic unexplained starting point for understanding the world.

The first approach is the strategy of atheism. The second approach is the strategy of theism. I want to defend the second strategy and to explain why I believe that, if we are driven by the desire to have as comprehensive and unified an understanding as possible, we shall find it in a scheme of things that has a place for belief in God.

If we were to start with the brute fact of the physical world, that world is described for us at least in part by the laws of science. But if we take the laws of nature as discerned by science seriously, and if we look at them carefully, we will find that they are not sufficiently intellectually satisfying in themselves. In fact, they seem to have a certain character which actually points beyond themselves. In other words, out of the scientific understanding of the world arise questions which seem to direct us beyond science itself to a deeper level of intelligibility. Here are two examples.

The first example is a fact about the physical world which is very familiar to us, a fact indeed that makes science possible. It is simply this: that we can understand the physical world, that it is intelligible to us in its rational transparency. Not only is that so, but it is mathematics which is the key to the understanding of the basic structure of the physical world. Moreover, we look for theories in physics which in their mathematical expression are economic and elegant. In other words, we seek theories which have about them an unmistakable character of mathematical beauty. It is our expectation that it is precisely theories characterized by mathematical beauty which will describe the structure of the world.

When we use mathematics as a key to unlock the secrets of the universe, something very peculiar is happening. Mathematics is the free exploration of the human mind. Our mathematical friends sit in their studies, and out of their heads they dream up the beautiful patterns of mathematics. Inexplicably, some of the most beautiful patterns thought up by the mathematicians are found actually to occur in the structure of the physical world. In other words, there is some deep-seated relationship between the reason within (the rationality of our minds—in this case mathematics) and the reason without (the rational order and structure of the physical world around us). The two fit together like a pair of gloves. That is a rather significant fact about the world, or so thought Einstein. Einstein once said, "The only incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible." Why, we should ask, are our minds so perfectly shaped to understand the deep patterns of the world around us?

You can always just shrug your shoulders and say, "Well, that's just the way it happens to be, and a bit of good luck for you chaps who are good at mathematics." But my instincts as a scientist, as someone who is searching for understanding, is not to be as intellectually lazy as that. A famous theoretical physicist, Eugene Wigner, once asked; "Why is mathematics so unreasonably effective in understanding the physical world?" One popular answer is that evolutionary biology explains it all. If our minds didn't fit the world around us, we just wouldn't have survived in the struggle for existence. That is obviously true, but it's only true up to a point. It's true about our experience of the everyday world of rocks and trees where we have to dodge the rocks and miss the trees. It's also true of our mathematical thinking of that world, which I suppose amounts to a little elementary arithmetic and a little elementary Euclidean geometry.

But the power of mathematics to illuminate and give un-

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derstanding of the physical world is not just confined to the everyday world. For example, mathematics also describes the counter-intuitive, unpicturable quantum world. That is a world that we can't visualize, but we can understand it using very abstract mathematics, ultimately the mathematics of spontaneously broken, gauge-field theories. The theoretical physicist Paul Dirac discovered something called quantum field theory which is fundamental to our understanding of the physical world. I can't believe Dirac's ability to discover that theory, or Einstein's ability to discover the general theory of relativity, is a sort of spin-off from our ancestors having to dodge saber-toothed tigers. Something much more profound, much more mysterious, is going on. Why do the reason within and the reason without fit together at a deep level? Religious belief provides an entirely rational and entirely satisfying explanation of that fact. It says that the reason within and the reason without have a common origin in that deeper rationality which is the reason of the Creator, whose will is the ground of both my mental and my physical experience. Theology has the power to answer a question, namely the intelligibility of the world, that arises from science but goes beyond science's ability to answer. Remember, science simply assumes the intelligibility of the world. Theology can take that striking fact and make it profoundly comprehensible.

When we look at the rational order and transparent beauty of the physical world, revealed through physical science, we see a world shot through with signs of mind. To a religious believer, it is the mind of the Creator that is being discerned in that way.

Let me give another example, a scientific discovery of a more specific character that's been made in the last thirty or forty years. We live in a universe that started about 15 billion years ago and it started extremely simple. One of the reasons why cosmologists can talk with great confidence about the very early universe is that the very early universe was so simple, just an expanding ball of energy. Yet, the world that started so simple has become very rich and complex through its evolving history, with human life being the most interesting consequences of that history. Human beings are the most complicated physical systems that we have encountered in our explorations of the world. The history of the universe has been astonishingly fruitful, and we understand many steps in that evolving, fruitful process. When we think about those steps and our understanding of them, we reach a very surprising conclusion.

Scientists play intellectual games, and they play those games with a serious intent. The sort of game they play is this: when we think of the universe we live in, it is characterized by certain types of scientific laws and certain types of basic forces that go with those laws. For example, we live in a universe which has gravity in it; not just any old gravity, but gravity of a particular type and a particular strength. There is an intrinsic strength to the force of gravity built into the fabric of our

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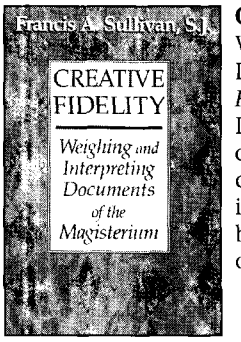

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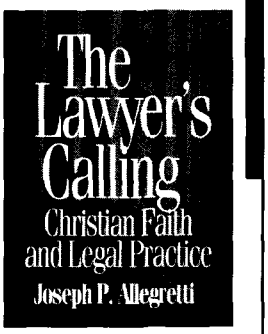

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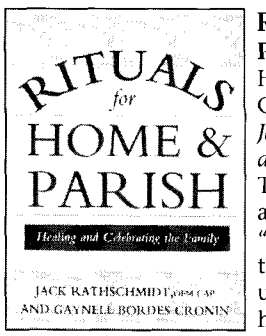

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universe, into the specification of what sort of world we live in. In fact, gravity is a very weak force. That might surprise you if you have ever walked out of a second story window, but the force of gravity is intrinsically very weak. We can play intellectual games and say, "I wonder what the universe would be like, and what its history would have been like, if gravity had been a bit different—if it had been much stronger, or even a little bit weaker than it is." And we can play similar games with all the other fundamental forces of nature. We can take electromagnetism, the force that holds matter together. We can sit on our chairs because electromagnetism holds them together, and it holds us together as well! We can again say, "What would the universe be like if electromagnetism were weaker, or if it were stronger?" We can play these intellectual games and, when we do that, a very surprising conclusion follows: Unless the fundamental physical laws were more or less precisely what they actually are, the universe would have had a very boring and sterile history. In other words, it's only a very special universe, a finely tuned universe, a universe in a trillion, you might say, which is capable of having had the amazingly fruitful history that has turned a ball of energy into a world containing human life. This insight is called the anthropic principle: a world capable of producing *anthropoi* (complicated "consequences" comparable to men and women) is a very special finely tuned universe. That's a very surprising discovery!

Every atom of carbon inside your body was once inside a star. We're all made from the ashes of dead stars.

Let me illustrate why. If you are to have a fruitful universe, one of the things you've got to have in it are stars. And, you've got to have stars of the right sort. The stars have two jobs that are absolutely indispensable to the fruitful history of the universe. One is, they have to act as long-term, steady energy sources. Essentially all energy here on earth comes from the sun, either directly or indirectly through fossil fuels. The sun has been burning steadily for about 5 billion years and it will continue to burn steadily for about another 5 billion years more. Long-term energy sources are indispensable because it takes billions of years for life to develop, and you must have what physicists call main sequence stars which are steadily-burning, long-lived stars.

We understand what makes stars burn in that sort of way. Basically it's the balance between the force of gravity and the electromagnetic forces. If you were to alter either of those forces, you would put the stars out of kilter. You'd have stars that either burned up very rapidly, that lived just for millions of years rather than billions of years, or you'd have stars that were very turbulent and unstable and flared up and died down, and that would be disastrous. No life could develop in a universe of that character. It is difficult to design a fruitful universe. You've got to get the right balance between gravity and electromagnetism to make the stars act as acceptable energy sources for life.

But that's only part of the story, because the stars have another tremendously important thing to do. The nuclear furnaces that burn inside the stars are the source of the chemical elements which are the raw materials of life. The early universe was very simple, and because the early universe was very simple it produced only very simple consequences. In fact, the very early universe made only the two simplest chemical elements, hydrogen and helium. And they are just not rich enough in their chemistry to make life possible. For life you need a much more complicated chemistry than hydrogen and helium by themselves could sustain. In particular, you need the chemistry of carbon, which has the ability to make those immensely complicated macro-molecules which are the basis of the possibility of life.

Every atom of carbon inside your body was once inside a star. We're all made from the ashes of dead stars. The only place you can make those heavier elements is inside the right sort of stars, and it's pretty difficult to make the stars do that. First, you've got to make carbon by making three helium nuclei stick together. That's actually quite hard to do and it depends upon very delicate aspects of the nuclear forces. Now, suppose you've figured out how to do that. You can't sit back and feel satisfied, because carbon is not enough. You've got to make lots more elements. You've got to make oxygen for example. That means making another helium nucleus stick to the carbon you already made and turn the carbon into oxygen. But, wait a minute. You've got to do that, but you must not overdo it. You mustn't turn all the carbon into oxygen; otherwise you've lost the carbon. So, you've got to get all these balances right, and so on, and so on, up to iron. If you can just tune the nuclear forces right, you can make all the elements up to iron inside the stars, but iron is the most stable of all the nuclear species and you can't get beyond iron inside the stars. You've still got two problems left that you've got to solve. One is you'll need to make some of the heavier elements beyond iron, and you also have to make accessible for life the elements you've already made. It's no good making carbon, oxygen, and all that, and leaving them locked up, useless, inside the cooling core of a dying star. You'll have made the elements, but they won't be of any use to bring about life. You've got to make sure that your stars are such that when they come to the end of their natural life, which is about 10 billion years, some of them will explode as supernovae and so will scatter out into the environment those chemical elements that they've made. If you're made from stardust, there's got to be some dust from stars around for you to be made of. You've got to have stellar explosions. And, if you're very clever, you can arrange in the explosion that the neutrinos, as they blow-off the outer layer of the star, then make those heavier elements like zinc and so on that you couldn't make inside the star itself.

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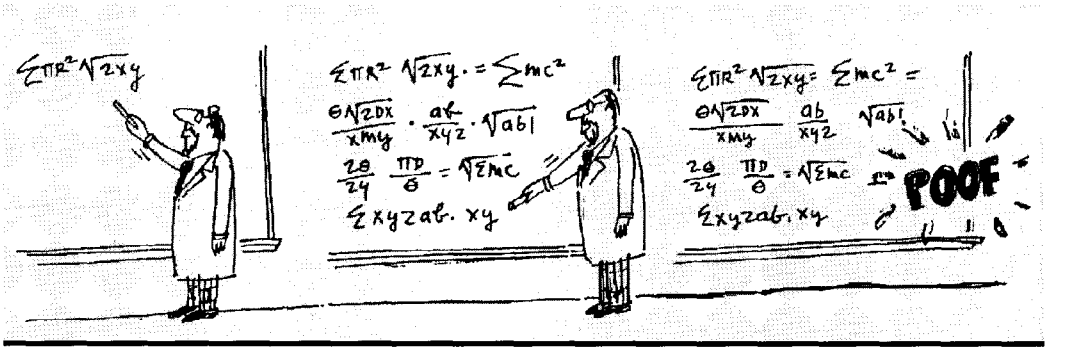
I hope I've given some idea of how making elements is a very complicated process, which depends for its fruitfulness on a very delicate, fine-tuned balance between the nuclear forces that control these processes. If those nuclear forces were in any way slightly different from the way they actually are, the stars would be incapable of making the elements of which you and I are composed.



What are we to make of all this? What do we make of the fact that the world we live in is fruitful only because its basic scientific constitution is of a very special, very finely tuned character. Once again, you can shrug your shoulders and say, "Well, that's just the way it happens to be. We're here because we're here and that's it." That doesn't seem to me to be a very rational approach to this issue. John Leslie, a philosopher at Guelf University in Canada, writes about these questions. He has written the best book about the anthropic principle, called *Universes*. He's a beguiling philosopher because he does his philosophy by telling stories, which is a very accessible way for those of us who are not professionally trained in philosophy to get the hang of it. He tells the following story. You are about to be executed. Your eyes are bandaged and you are tied to the stake. Twelve highly-trained sharpshooters have their rifles leveled at your heart. They pull the trigger, the shots ring-out—you've survived! What do you do? Do you shrug your shoulders and say, "Well, that's the way it is. No need to seek an explanation of this. That's just the way it is." Leslie rightly says that's surely not a rational response to what's going on. He suggests that there are only two rational explanations of that amazing incident. One is that many, many, many executions are taking place today and just by luck you happen to be the one in which they all miss. That's a rational explanation. The other explanation, is, of course, that the sharpshooters are on your side and they missed by choice. In other words there was a purpose at work of which you were unaware.

That parable translates well into thinking about a finely tuned and fruitful universe. One possibility is that maybe there are lots and lots of different universes, all with different given physical laws and circumstances. If there are lots and lots of them (and there would really have to be rather a lot) then just by chance, in one of them, the laws and circumstances will be such as to permit the development of carbon-based life. But, of course, that's the one in which we live, because we couldn't appear anywhere else. It's a possible explanation and in fact it's called the "many-universes" interpretation. The other possibility is that there is more going on than has met the eye and the sharpshooters are on our side. That translates into the idea that this is not just any old universe. Rather it is a universe which is a creation which has been endowed by its creator with just those finely tuned given laws and circumstances that will make its history fruitful. Our world and our lives are the fulfillment of a purpose.

Leslie says in relation to the anthropic principle that there is an even-handed choice between the many universes and the anthropic theories. By itself, I think that is correct. Let me emphasize that both are metaphysical explanations. We have no adequate, scientific motivation for thinking of any other universe but the universe of our direct experience. So the speculation that there are many, many other universes is a metaphysical speculation. I'm not against metaphysics. In fact, you can't live without it. But the many-universes interpretation is a metaphysical speculation just as positing the existence of a creator is a metaphysical speculation. Of course, if you think there are other reasons, as indeed I do, for believing that there is a God whose will and purpose lie behind the universe, then that second explanation, that the world is fruitful because it is a creation, becomes the more economic and persuasive explanation.

In both the intelligibility of the world and the finely tuned fruitfulness of the world, we see insights arising from science, but calling for some explanation and understanding which, by its very nature, will go beyond what science itself can provide. I think that suggests the insufficiency of a merely scientific view of the world. In fact, I think we're living in an age where there is a great revival of natural theology taking place. That revival of natural theology is taking place, not on the whole among the theologians, who have rather lost their nerve in that area, but among the scientists. And not just among pious scientists like myself, but among scientists who have no particular time for, or understanding of, conventional religion. Nevertheless, many agnostic scientists feel that the rational beauty and the finely tuned fruitfulness of the world suggest that there is some intelligence or purpose behind the universe.

That revived natural theology is also revised in the sense that it is more modest in its ambitions. Unlike either the natural theology of the late Middle Ages or the eighteenth century, it doesn't claim to talk about proofs of God. We're in an area of discourse where knock-down argument or proof

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is not available. Rather, we're looking for insights which are intellectually satisfying.

Theology offers science a deeper, more comprehensive understanding than would be obtained from itself alone. But there is traffic across the border in both directions. The gift that science gives to theology is rather different—for it is to tell theology what the physical world is actually like in its structure and in its history. That raises issues to which theology has to address itself.

The classic interaction between science and theology concerns the question of origins. How did things begin? Actually I don't think that's a very important subject. People wrongly think that the theological doctrine of Creation is concerned with how things began. Who lit the blue touch paper of the big bang? The biblical doctrine of Creation isn't about that. It's not concerned with temporal origin, but with ontological origin. It answers the question, why do things exist at all? God is as much the Creator today as he was 15 billion years ago. Thus, though big-bang cosmology is very interesting scientifically, theologically it is insignificant. In a *Brief History of Time*, my friend and former colleague, Steve Hawking, says that if you think about quantum cosmology and how quantum mechanics fuzzed out the very early universe, then, though the universe has a finite age, it has no dateable beginning. Now that's a very interesting scientific speculation, but there's no particular theological mileage in it. Hawking says, "If there is no beginning, what place then for a Creator?" It is theologically naive to answer other than by, "Every place, as the Sustainer of the universe in Being." God is not a God of the edges, with a vested interest in beginnings. God is the God of all times and all places.

It is in sustaining the fruitful process of the world that God is at work as the Creator. Two insights about the process of the world come to us from science. The first is the very fertile process which turned a ball of energy into a world containing you and me. The second question is: Given we've got a universe with fine-tuning (given we've got the right ground rules), how does it actually come about that the world makes itself? How does it realize its in-built fruitfulness, its in-built potentiality? We understand many bits of that process quite well. All those bits we do understand seem to realize that fruitfulness through an interplay between two opposing tendencies which we could describe as "chance" and "necessity." Those are slippery words. By "chance," I mean simply happenstance—just the way things happen to be. When the universe was about a billion years old, there just happened to be a little bit more matter here than there. That was chance—happenstance—getting things going. That happenstance produced something lasting through the operation of "necessity," or lawful regularity. Because there was a little bit more matter here than there that matter exerted a little bit stronger gravitational pull, and draws more matter to itself in a sort of snowballing process. That's how scientists picture the universe: it started so uniform and began to get a bit grainy and lumpy. You've got to have the stars and you've got to have the galaxies that contain the stars. A fruitful universe has to become lumpy at some stage. That begins through chance, happenstance, and develops through necessity, snowballing through the attractive force of gravity. And, it seems that the interplay between those two tendencies, chance as the origin of novelty, and necessity as the sifter and preserver of the novelty thus produced, is the prime way in which the fruitfulness of the universe is realized.

A more familiar example of this process is provided by biological evolution. Mutations occur through happenstance. That produces some new possibility for life, which is then sifted and preserved in the lawfully regular environment which is necessary for the operation of natural selection. In every stage of the fruitful history of the universe there is a interplay between chance and necessity. What do we make of that?

Jacques Monod, a great French biochemist, wrote a famous book in the early 1970s called *Chance and Necessity*. Monod argued that "Pure chance, absolutely free, but blind lies at the basis of this stupendous edifice of evolution." Of course the point where Monod puts in the knife is the word "blind." For Monod, the role of chance, of happenstance, in the evolving history of the universe subverts the religious claim that

Steven Lewis

Shooting Stars

This blue morning on the drive to Norfolk,
I passed a bread truck
and thought of the nothingness of death.

This dark blue evening we lay on our backs
on the cottage roof
and watched for shooting stars, the sky

as vast and glittery as Pamlico Sound
when the sun sets
orange. When meteors blaze and streak

we ooh and ahh as if we've done something
right
and have been rewarded.

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there is a purpose at work in the world. For Monod, the role of chance means that ultimately the universe is a tale told by an idiot.

Monod's is a serious challenge. Nonetheless, we can take the same scientific picture of the interplay between happenstance and regularity, but offer an alternative interpretation, a more evenhanded interpretation, which lays as much emphasis on the necessary half as upon the chance half of the process. I respectfully suggest that when God came to create the world he was faced with a dilemma. The Christian God is a God of love and the gift of love is always the gift of independence, the genuine otherness of the beloved. Parents know that. There comes a time when Johnny has to be allowed to ride his bicycle into dangerous traffic on his own. The gift of love is a gift of a true independence. A God who is loving will endow his creation with its own due freedom, its own due independence. But independence by itself can easily degenerate into license and chaos. However, God is not only loving, he is faithful. And the God who is faithful will surely endow his creation also with the gift of reliability. Yet reliability by itself can easily rigidify into a merely mechanical world. I believe that the Christian God, who is both loving and faithful, has given to his creation the twin gifts of independence and reliability, which find their reflection in the fruitful process of the universe through the interplay between happenstance and regularity, between chance and necessity.

We thought the everyday physical world was tame, it was predictable, it was controllable. Now, we've discovered that, in fact, almost all the everyday physical world is not like that at all.

Moreover, many people have an outdated picture of the physical world. The great triumphs of the science in the eighteenth century, and the further discoveries of the nineteenth century, encouraged a mechanical, rather deterministic view of the physical world. We've always known that can't be right because we've always known that human beings have the experience of choice and responsibility. Twentieth-century science has seen the death of a merely mechanical view of the world. In part, that is due to the cloudy fitfulness of quantum theory. But more important still, it is also due to another unexpected insight of science gained in the last thirty-four years.

Even the physics of the everyday world, even the physics of Newton, is not as mechanical as Sir Isaac and his followers thought it to be. That's a very surprising discovery. Those of us who learned classical physics, learned that subject by thinking about certain tame, predictable systems, like a steadily ticking pendulum. That's a very simple robust system. If you take a pendulum and slightly disturb it, or you are slightly ignorant about how it is moving, the slight disturbance only produces slight consequences, the slight ignorance produces only slight errors in your estimation of how it will behave. We thought the everyday physical world was all like that. It was tame, it was predictable, it was controllable. Now, we've discovered that, in fact, almost all the everyday physical world is not like that at all.

Almost all of the everyday physical world is so exquisitely sensitive that the smallest disturbance produces quite uncontrollable and unpredictable consequences. This is the insight that is rather ineptly named chaotic dynamics. The discovery was first made in relation to attempts to make models of the earth's weather systems. In the trade it is sometimes called the butterfly effect: that the great weather systems of the earth are so sensitive to individual circumstance that a butterfly stirring the air with its wings in Beijing today will have consequences for the storm systems over New England in a month's time! Now, the world—that exquisitely sensitive world—is an intrinsically unpredictable world. We can't know about all those butterflies in Beijing. We've learned that the physical world, whatever it is, it isn't mechanical, even at the everyday level. It is something more subtle and more supple. Modern science already presents us with a picture of the physical world that is unpredictable in detail and open to the future. That is a gain for science. Science begins to describe a world which is sufficiently flexible in its development, a world of true becoming, of which we can consider ourselves as inhabitants. The future is genuinely new, not just rearrangement of what was there in the past. In such a world of true becoming, with its open future, we can begin to understand our own powers of agency, our own powers to act and bring things about. Such a physical world is capable also of being open to God's providential interaction and his agency. Our whole picture of the physical world is much more hospitable to the presence of both humanity and divine providence than would have seemed conceivable a hundred years ago.

I'd like to conclude with a quotation which in many ways summarizes what I'm trying to do as a physicist and as a priest. I want to hold these two parts of me together, and to enjoy their friendly relationship. I believe I can do so, not without puzzles, of course, but I hope without dishonesty and without compartmentalism. I've tried to show how science and theology interact positively, how their mutual relationship is one of friendship in the search for truth and not warfare with each other. Bernard Lonergan once said, "God is the all-sufficient explanation, the eternal rapture glimpsed in every Archimedean cry of Eureka." I like that very much. The search for understanding, which is so natural to a scientist, is, in the end, the search for God. That is why science and religion must be friends. □

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Richard Alleva

WHO KILLED THE SHERIFF?

John Sayles's 'Lone Star'

Lone Star is John Sayles's latest exploration of The Way We Live Now. One of the very few filmmakers to have won significant literary recognition (he's received the National Book Award and a MacArthur "genius" grant), Sayles brings a novelist's appetite for texture and characterization to his movie work. In his films, voices aren't drowned by gunfire. His storytelling is patient, thorough, sometimes even tentative. And, like the best novelists, he aspires to extend the reach of his understanding by trying to get under the skin of those different from himself: Latinos, blacks, homosexuals, the very young, the very old, the poor, the rich, all kinds of women. With Sayles, this is never PC dutifulness but Shakespearean curiosity. If America had such a Japanese institution as National Living Treasure, Sayles would be the only current filmmaker deserving of the title.

But the defects of his virtues are nearly always as vividly on display as the virtues themselves, and I often steal away from a Sayles film feeling crushed by a sense of my own ingratitude. I certainly wasn't bored by *Lone Star*, for most of it is both good entertainment and insightful social commentary, but the old defects are still there in force. It is the best of Sayles; it is the worst of Sayles.

The plot of *Lone Star* is the stuff of melodrama, but Sayles, of course, uses it only to explore the life of a Texas border town. A decades-old skeleton is found in the middle of scrub flats. Sheriff Sam Deeds soon determines that the remains are of a vicious predecessor of his, Wade, a lawman of the fifties, merciless to Mexicans and blacks, a taker of bribes, a master of extortion. (Wade's depredations are extensively portrayed in flashbacks, so the dead man is one of the more important characters in the movie.) On the night of his disappearance, Wade had been denounced and faced down in public by his own deputy, Sam's father, Buddy. Did Buddy Deeds, fearing Wade's retribution and coveting his job, murder his boss? Whether he did or not, Buddy went on to become a decent sheriff: tough, not above political manipulations but basically honest, well respected by Anglo, Hispanic, and black members of the community. Now his son and successor, Sam, must pursue an investigation that might destroy the dead father's reputation. Further complicating his feelings is the grudge he has long harbored against

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Deeds senior for terminating the teenaged Sam's courtship of a Mexican-American girl. While pursuing his investigation, our hero resumes that love affair after a twenty-year hiatus, and the solution of the mystery casts that affair, and Buddy's old opposition to it, in a radically different light.

The real substance of this movie is neither the detective work nor Sam's psychological turmoil but the reactions and reflections of the people he has to interview. It is these exchanges that reveal the racial and class tensions of the Southwest and the barriers and bonds built up in a border town by more than two centuries of troubled Texas history.

As usual, Sayles makes his cast of characters as inclusive as possible. There is the Mexican-American community of teachers, merchants, deputies, a reporter with an axe to grind. Anglos are represented by politicians, businessmen, concerned parents, a frazzled divorcee, soldiers from a nearby army base, Sam himself. There are black housewives, a bar owner, the army post's commander and his family. And there is one lone Indian—a wry seller of novelties at a roadside stand. This makes the canvas of *Lone Star* very full and rich.

But also exasperatingly crowded. As in Sayles's *City of Hope*, there are more *dramatis personae* here than the story can cope with. In the case of the black characters, the role of the saloon owner, Big O, is very securely placed within the plot: his peculiar situation, a covert alliance with whites he wouldn't normally conspire with, was brought on by his youthful defiance of the monstrous Sheriff Wade. But the estranged son and grandson of Big O are laboriously shoehorned into the story so that Sayles can explore the tensions within black middle-class families, a subject that needs a movie unto itself. (Of course, the strains between the black fathers and sons parallel Sam's troubles with his father, but why is such a parallel needed in this already complicated scenario?) Though Sam's interview with the Native American vendor is flavorsomely written and acted, the only vital piece of information it adds to the story should have come from one of Buddy's fellow cops or from one of the Mexican-American townspeople, since it concerns Buddy's romantic involvement with a Hispanic. Apparently Sayles decided that any story of the Southwest must have an Indian in it and proceeded to stuff in just one more character. But good sociology doesn't necessarily make for good storytelling.

However, Sayles goes beyond sociology in his dialogue and casting and directing of actors. Time and again, he finds the right phrase to either skewer or enliven a character. When a Mexican-American history teacher, confronting a school board exasperated by her efforts to present the Mexican side of Texas history, pleads, "We're presenting a more complete picture," an Anglo mother snaps, "And that's what's got to stop!" At the unveiling of a tribute to Buddy Deeds, a corny sculpture showing the late sheriff placing a paternal hand on the shoulder of a pathetic Chicano waif, a couple of geezers remark, "It does look like old Buddy." "Yeah, I think he's gonna run that Mexican kid in for loitering."

Sayles has always had a problem with pacing. Every scene tends to be *andante*, rarely *largo*, never *presto*. I sometimes get the feeling that Sayles watches his characters with the maddening patience of a cud-chewing cow. And though I'm glad that he dares to let his plots ramify in a novelistic fashion, continuing to do so in the final half-hour is a strategy fatal to the most generous of attention-spans. A reader can put a novel down long enough to renew patience and digest new subject matter. But movies shorter than *Spartacus* don't have intermissions. (Sayles's movies probably benefit from being viewed in video format.)

The same problem mars *Lone Star*. But to see how the excellence of an individual scene can mitigate defective overall pacing, witness the visit of Sam to his ex-wife Bunny, whose garage holds certain documents that will solve the mystery. This scene is in *Lone Star*'s final twenty minutes, just when the filmmaker should be homing in on his conclusion and the explanation of the murder. Instead, Sayles stops the story so that we can get acquainted with Bunny and her quirks (drugs, sports mania, Oedipal fixation) and realize how wise Sam was to leave her and get on with his life. This should have sunk *Lone Star*, but so shrewd are dialogue and direction and so captivating is Frances McDormand's toothy, giggle-eyed rendering of Bunny that we stay with the scene even as an exasperated voice in the back of one's skull may be whining, "Hey, when are we going to find out who shot the sheriff?"

In fact, there has never been a better acted John Sayles movie, and that's saying a lot since he has long worked deftly with players. Here, only Elizabeth

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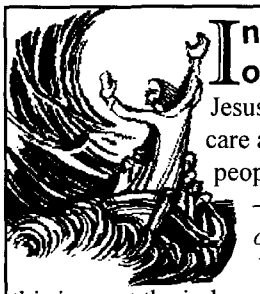
Peña, as Deeds's former and future lover, fails to deliver; she seems to stand outside her role instead of inhabiting it. But Miriam Colon is perfect as her mother, all fury and flounce but capable of compassion. Clifton James achieves exactly the right ambiguity as the mayor, keeping us guessing as to whether his canniness is rooted in greed or wisdom. Ron Canada might have elected to play Big O as a more flamboyant character in the manner of James Earl Jones, but Canada's silkier approach gives us a man weathered, not broken by years of struggle. His girlfriend is played by one of the few true living legends of dance, Carmen de Lavallade, and she is now as eloquent with words and glances as she once was with her body. Joe Morton gives Big O's officer son just proportions of resentment, vulnerability, and military spruceness, all underpinned by irreducible decency. The big casting surprise is that of Kris Kristofferson, Mr. Laid-Back Dude himself, as the monstrous Sheriff Wade. Kristofferson taunts, glowers, and stomps with the requisite repellent gusto.

All would be for nought if the lead actor fizzled. The pitfall of the role is that Sam Deeds is mainly a fact-gatherer and a sounding board rather than a truly interesting protagonist. But Chris Cooper is a master minimalist who can keep your attention just by the way he leans against a car or cocks his head at a suspicious remark. Like an earlier Cooper of the silver screen, this actor makes taciturnity both formidable and reassuring.

The superb cameraman, Stuart Dryburgh, gives *Lone Star* a memorably sun-baked look, and all the details of art direction seem right—the handles on beer taps are shaped like six-shooters—but the real visual triumph is in Sayles's choreography of camera and players. Just one example: during that school board meeting, everyone at first argues without listening and the camera whips back and forth from one vituperating face to another. Then the history teacher speaks cogently and, with reason getting a momentary hearing, the frenzied camera movement is replaced by calm, conventional editing. But the shouting resumes and so does the jerky back-and-forth panning of the camera. Thus, the filmmaking mimics the rise and fall of civility.

I doubt that Sayles's moviemaking will either improve or deteriorate in subsequent films. The patience that seems an inextricable part of what is commendable in his work would probably be destroyed by a shot of adrenaline. His admirers will have to abide his defects to savor his virtues, which have never been brighter than in *Lone Star*. □



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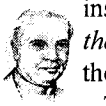

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MEDIA

Frank McConnell

ELOISE KNAPP HAY, R.I.P.

I've lost a sparring partner

Eloise Knapp Hay died at six in the evening of April 30, 1996, of inoperable brain cancer.

She was the best friend—or a best friend—to a lot of people, many of them students and colleagues in the English Department at the University of California at Santa Barbara, where she had taught, counseled, and generally, lovingly mothered for thirty-odd years. For weeks after her death, my office—right next to hers since I came to UCSB in 1982—was the scene of an ongoing Irish wake, complete with brandy, jokes, and tears from students and unexpectedly human faculty alike—as busy, I said, as a Greyhound bus station but not, as responded a grad student with the improbable name Benjamin Strong, as neat or as clean.

Eloise was a grateful carrier of the holy fire. Like a character from Henry James, she had immense, though subtly artic-

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ulated, passions, and they were her Catholic faith, her devotion to her family, her ferocious love for the written word, and her obsession with being of service to her students and friends. I'd like to say that was a rank-ordering, but in her case they all seemed to be somehow part of a single, immense urge of charity. She was the only true innocent I've known: a person whose soul seemed to have been mixed or brewed or fermented—how do they make souls?—without a soupçon of malice: definitely VSOP.

And of course, being perfectly innocent, she was also perfectly loony—at least by the reckoning of this world. She could drive you bloody *crazy*. Every Friday we used to punch out for the week and hit a local bar for a nice wind-down: those were my Martini days, and Eloise liked Manhattans. And we discovered that we could not agree about a single book, or about a single thing *in* a single book we both adored. I would rave about James's *The Golden Bowl*, which we agreed was the greatest novel in the English language: but, she would explain to me in her modulated East Coast accent that I completely misread the character Maggie Verver, the heroine. T. S. Eliot? Forget it. "Really, Frank," she would purr, "you can't *possibly* think *The Waste Land* is as important as *Four Quartets*." Well; gulp; uh, waiter, *uno mas*? I took to creeping into her grad seminar on James before she got there and scrawling on the blackboard "Maggie Verver Burns in Hell!" And recently another of our mutual students, Tom Henthorne, told me that she once told him, over cocktails, with an expression of deep concern, "You know, Frank admires all the *wrong* Graham Greene novels."

But any of her students—and there were so many—or her friends could tell you the same kind of Eloiseisms. She was opinionated, doctrinal, eccentric. I will never forget her, every Christmas Eve, swooping into our house in her black velvet cape and commandeering the kitchen to prepare the hors d'oeuvres, meanwhile chattering with my wife, Celeste, about the health of our cats and telling me things like I really did think too much of Albert Camus. She was Chestertonian—if you can imagine a slim, female Chesterton with the kind of face whose beauty the passing of time only sculpts more accurately. On second thought, don't try.

The point is that her eccentricity was also her greatness. At the core of her being was her faith: I have never known anyone so maddeningly Catholic, and I've known a lot of maddening Catholics. But Catholicism was just the thing that formed and informed her astonishing *goodness* to her students, that made her such a superb teacher. Most of the wretched, careerist, and literature-hating weenies who currently infest the academy and cheapen the idea of the university call teaching a "profession." For Eloise teaching was a vocation in the Catholic sense of the word—a calling to glorify her God by sharing with others her delight and rapture at the holy things that can be done with language.

Her love of literature was matched by her deep care for her students. A few years ago, the husband of one of our mutual students decided that he hadn't "experienced enough of life"—and try not to be surprised that he was a philosophy major. So he simply left his wife, ventured out to confront the big world of "experience," and didn't look back. Everybody in the English Department clucked and shook their heads over our poor abandoned grad student. Eloise, though, had the girl move in with her; consoled her for three months, talked with the errant husband; and got them back together. They now have a two-year-old baby girl and are as happy as clams in high water. There were a number of incidents like this for Eloise, and they make the phrase, "office hours," sound pathetically inadequate.

How she loved to quarrel—in and out of class—precisely because she believed we should take things like poetry and fiction seriously, and try to use them as a secular Scripture or as what Kenneth Burke called "equipment for living." But the great thing about quarreling with Eloise was that it was always a real quarrel, and not a springtime midpasture butting of ego against ego. She assumed that you—friend, colleague, graduate, or undergraduate, or whatever—had as much to offer as did she, and if she told you how wrong you were, she would listen as you told her how wrong she was. It suddenly strikes me: that may be the only real teaching there really is: humans talking in trust to one another about things that matter.

She found out last summer that she was terminal, and didn't tell anybody, except her husband and her son. She got through most of the year, teaching and driving me crazy—our last fight was about the merits of Bertrand Russell, and guess which side I took—caring for her students, and, like the Spartan boy, smiling as the wolf gnawed her guts out. And then, early April—it all came down. I had to be told, because she was failing and failing badly, and I had to be prepared, along with some others, to take over her classes. She still insisted that she would finish the term, though, and taught her last class from a wheelchair. Then, a precipitous decline, and ten days' worth of *Vernichtung* in the terminal ward. And she wouldn't take calls. She didn't want calls or visits because she wanted all of us to remember her as she was at her best.

She wrote a great and influential book on Joseph Conrad, and a book on Eliot, and a lot of essays, and inspired and nurtured thousands of students who will always remember her with affection as deep as my own. But there are versions of her all across the country: teachers who really teach, really care and love—both the books and the kids—and live in the perpetual shock of believing they are doing something nice for (in Eloise's case) God or (in mine) for humankind.

There's the legend of the thirty-six *tzaddiks*. There are thirty-six unknown saints, say the Hasidim, purely good people whose unrecognized goodness sustains the world. In fact, I think there are rather more than thirty-six. But I am sure that one of them has now left a vacancy. Eloise believed in heaven, so of course that's where she is now. If I ever stumble in there, I expect to come across her, in a celestial bistro, knocking back a Manhattan and picking a fight with John Henry Cardinal Newman and—heavy sigh—T. S. Eliot. □

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What trust reveals

Quarks, Chaos & Christianity
Questions to Science and Religion
John Polkinghorne
Crossroad, $9.95. 102 pp.

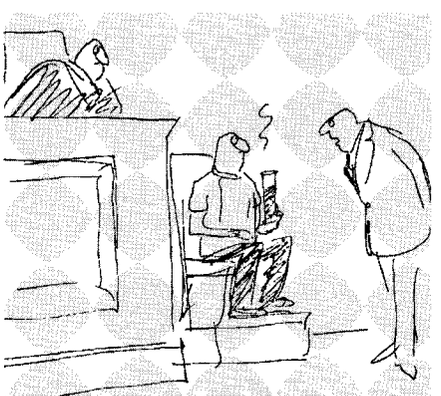
Edward T. Oakes

The poet W. H. Auden used to enjoy playing a parlor game with his friends called "Purgatory," the object of which was to come up with the names of two famous people from history whose penance was to be locked into a room together. According to the rules, the two were allowed all the creature comforts necessary to make their stay at least minimally tolerable, but with one hitch: they would not be let out and admitted into heaven until they had first reconciled. (Locking Leo Tolstoy and Oscar Wilde together in this padded *purgatorio* was one of the more amusing juxtapositions they came up with.)

When reflecting on the often neuralgic relations between science and theology, I like to imagine what it would be like if Richard Dawkins, the current watchdog growling belligerently at the portals of the atheist-Darwinian camp, and Stanley Jaki, the physicist and Benedictine priest, were to be sentenced to this demanding Purgatory; for the former thinks any dialogue at all on a formal level between the natural sciences and theology undermines the integrity of science, while the latter thinks science is an essentially truncated activity without the scientist's explicit conversion to Christ. What makes this juxtaposition an amusing one for me is not just the lively debate their enforced companionship would generate but also how both men would have to abandon a trait they share: indulging in what might be called the Argument by Gruff Dismissal.

My own variation on this game is to imagine another famous person as the *tertium quid*, someone whom the angels would have to call in as a referee or mediator if relations broke down irreparably. And in the case of Dawkins and Jaki no one would be better suited to getting these two worthies into paradise than John Polkinghorne, the particle physicist and Anglican priest. For one of the great virtues of his work in this area is his irenicism. This virtue, I hasten to add, is leagues removed from a bland, naïve assertion that all's well with science and theology.

For one thing, Polkinghorne admits a fundamental dichotomy separating religion from science. Science and religion are both, as Plato said of philosophy, grounded in wonder; but science for Polkinghorne relates to the world primarily through testing and hypothesis, whereas "in the realm of personal experience, whether between ourselves or with God, we all know that *testing* has to give way to *trusting*."



"Now refresh my memory. Are you pro- or anti-eureka."

Despite this fundamental dichotomy of attitude, the author insists that "science and religion are intellectual cousins under the skin." What he means by that is, first, that there is, to quote the title of another of his books, only *one world*; and since science and religion are basic anthropological constants, there must be a fundamental compatibility located somewhere in that one world. Perhaps the best way of expressing how Polkinghorne sees this relationship would be to say that science, when pushed to the limits of *understanding*, gives way to the religious *question*, which can receive an affirmative answer only under the rubric of trust, not testing:

> Science itself throws up some questions from its own experience that go beyond its own power to answer. In other words, there are aspects of nature that science has to take for granted, but which, it seems to me, *we* shouldn't take for granted. We should try to understand why they are the way they are. They center on two big questions: "Why can we do science at all?" and "Why is the universe so special?" We're so used to using science to understand the world that we seldom stop to think how odd it is that this is possible.

The publisher's blurb claims that if C. S. Lewis were a physicist, he might have written this book, a perhaps all-too-rare example of a publisher's advertised judgment that is both sober and true. For the author displays the same virtues as a writer on science and religion that Lewis showed as an apologete for "mere" Christianity: simplicity of style, accessibility to the general reader, and a deep learning in his chosen field of expertise lightly set forth. No reader will feel intimidated by this book.

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But I cannot help but feel that it suffers from some of the same flaws that pervade Lewis's lay apologetics. One of Lewis's great weaknesses, at least to my mind, was his treatment of evil. In his attempt to accept evolution and the book of Genesis simultaneously, he posited, in his book *The Problem of Pain*, a wholly invented scene in some forest primeval of a protohuman pair (were they the first emergence of *homo sapiens*? the text is unclear at the point) who made the first conscious rebellion against God and who thereby introduced (at least moral) evil into the world. But this contradicts the picture of nature "red in tooth and claw" that is fundamental to the nature of the Darwinian hypothesis, and in any case seems to be a jerry-built construct to bring Darwin and Genesis into harmony.

Admittedly, it is not easy nowadays to develop a Christian theology of evil that does not collapse the categories of Creation and Fall together in the Gnostic manner; but avoiding that danger by unconvincing scenarios is no answer either. And as that was Lewis's failing, so it seems to be the weak point in Polkinghorne's book, though in reverse. For example, he holds that evil is an inevitable by-product of a finite physical world, but this leaves unanswered how God could call the whole of creation entirely "good." Moreover, in his discussion of eschatology—which is so bursting with confident faith that the author even wonders aloud if his vision might be too good to be true—he is forced to ask himself:

> It is a wonderful vision, but a nagging question may well occur to you. If the new creation is going to be so wonderful, why did God bother with the old? If that world will be free from pain, death, and sorrow, why did he create this one instead, which seems to have so much suffering in it?

These are obviously unanswerable questions, at least under the rubric of testability, which is why trust is so crucial in the religious stance. However, the author does advance the discussion in one respect. He mentions that when James Clerk Maxwell identified light as waves of electromagnetic energy, the question seemed settled in a most conclusive and satisfactory way until, in the early years of this century, Max Plank and Albert Einstein showed that in some circumstances light behaved not as waves but as "pellets" or "packets" of discrete energy quanta. In other words, physicists knew that they had to use both wave and particle language long before they knew how the two could be reconciled.

Applied to theological language, this is an analogy that could begin to limp all too soon, but I think Polkinghorne is fundamentally right: like early particle physicists, believers really don't understand how God can be good and yet there be evil in the universe—it's just that it proves impossible to give up either experience. But as they continue to grope for answers, these trusting though baffled believers may at least be grateful that this gentle physicist-priest has illumined inherently dark mysteries with his own radiant trust. □

Edward T. Oakes, S.J., *is the author of* Pattern of Redemption: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar *(Continuum).*

CHINESE APOCALYPSE

God's Chinese Son
The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan
Jonathan Spence
W. W. Norton and Co., $27.50, 400 pp.

Nicholas R. Clifford

In the mid-nineteenth century, about the time that Americans were deciding the future of the Union on their own battlefields, another far greater struggle had broken out on the other side of the world. Some comparative statistics: our Civil War left roughly 600,000 dead in the armies of both sides. Assuming another 200,000 civilian deaths—surely an overestimate—would mean roughly 2.5 percent dead in a population of 32 million. In China, as Jonathan Spence points out in his new book, tens of millions died as a result of the Taiping wars. How many tens of millions? We don't know. If we assume 20 million deaths, that would be roughly 5 percent of a population of some 400 million (and, though it is no part of Spence's subject, there was an enormous number of additional casualties caused by three other widespread midcentury rebellions).

In America, the Union emerged stronger from the war; in China, the Qing dynasty was fatally weakened, though it would be almost another half-century before it collapsed. America's war was fought with modern weapons and modern communications; in the Taiping war, though there were some signs of modernity, by and large traditional means were used. There was, however, at least one similarity: in each war, on the rebel side, one of the best generals was named Lee (though Li Xiucheng never quite achieved the fame of Robert E. of Virginia). Another Li—Li Hongzhang—campaigned with distinction on the government side.

God's Chinese Son is not a history of the Taiping rebellion, and the author disclaims any desire to do what others have done (although it's fair to say we have no history of the rebellion that combines both the readability and historical accuracy Spence brings to his task). It is, rather, a biography of its extraordinary leader and guiding spirit, Hong Xiuquan. Hong and his Taipings have always had a special fascination for Westerners, in large part because of the Protestant influence on the rebellion and its leaders, and some have even suggested that, if the Taipings had triumphed, China would have been Christianized.

That stretches the imagination. Hong,

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falling ill after one of his periodic failures in the examinations for an official career, had found himself taken up into Heaven, where he not only met God, but realized that he, as Jesus' younger brother, was himself part of God's heavenly family. There he (the account of his visit grew more elaborate over the years) was armed with a sword, and after some hard fighting driving demons out of Heaven, was told to return below and rid the earth of the demons there, demons who, it became clear, consisted of the Qing dynasty and their supporters. In an extraordinary set of military campaigns, beginning in 1851, he led his followers up from southwest China to the Yangtze Valley, and into the great city of Nanjing, which he entered in triumph, wearing the yellow dragon robe that was the prerogative of an emperor.

For the next eleven years the Taipings sought to establish the heavenly kingdom in Nanjing, and to extend their sway over the lower Yangtze Valley. They drew up elaborate social and administrative codes (which, incidentally, gave women rather more freedom than they enjoyed in Chinese society), though how far any of them were actually put into practice is still an open question. Meanwhile Hong—whose instruction in Christianity had come largely from the Southern Baptist missionary Issachar Roberts—worked to systematize and expound Taiping Christianity, in the course of it bowdlerizing parts of the Bible (Noah's drunkenness, Lot's incest, and Jacob's tricking Esau out of his inheritance, for example; all offended Chinese family values). Meanwhile he sought—unsuccessfully—the neutrality, if not the friendship, of what he imagined to be his Western Protestant coreligionists, particularly the British and the Americans. In 1856, a terrible power struggle came to a climax, in which Hong had one of his rivals killed, and thousands of his followers put to the sword. Meanwhile, the forces loyal to the Qing fought back, ineffectively at first, but by 1864 their power was too great for the Taipings to combat, and Nanjing fell in May of that year. Again, there was massive bloodshed.

Spence is a writer who has often been willing to take more risks than most of his fellow academic historians. *God's Chinese Son*, for example, is written entirely in the present tense, thus giving it a very real sense of immediacy. Moreover, he is extraordinarily good at calling up the color and life of cities like Canton and Shanghai, or a Chinese village, its folk rituals skirting the borders of the unorthodox, or in describing the social dislocations of the Opium War, and the sense of uncertainty, of worried anticipation, that helped give the early Taipings a climate in which to flourish. "The air of Thistle Mountain is thick with other holy visits, dreams, and portents," he writes of the early days, while the Taipings were gathering in Guangxi. "A martial host descends from heaven and fights the bandits....Another time it is angels in yellow robes who descend to earth, and save Hong in the nick of time from devils carrying firearms...."

Such a style from a historian may put some on edge; how does he really know what was going on? But colorful writing is no crime, and it would be hard to charge Spence with going beyond his evidence. At the same time, I should have liked more on the effect Hong's movement had on Chinese history of the period. Spence does, for instance, a superb job of placing the Taipings within the context of a native Chinese millenarianist tradition while also showing the influence, through Protestantism, of Western millenarianism as well. But—as he himself has made clear in *The Search for Modern China* (1990)—there was a lot more to the rebellion than Hong Xiuquan, and it would help to see the rebellion's place in the larger picture of nineteenth-century history.

On the other hand, as any writer knows, there is a special circle in Hell reserved for those reviewers who take authors to task, not for the books they have written, but for the books reviewers think they should have written. Spence has chosen to restrict himself largely to Hong's life, and has produced an immensely readable account of it. □

Nicholas R. Clifford *is the author of* The House of Memory *(1994).*

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SHE CAN PUNCH

Serpent on the Rock
A Personal View of Christianity
Alice Thomas Ellis
Trafalgar Square, $13.95, 223 pp.

Paul Baumann

Alice Thomas Ellis, the blunt-speaking British novelist, first came to my attention when a friend handed me a copy of *The Summer House* a few years ago, a movie version of which had then just had a brief theatrical release. I didn't see the movie (featuring Jean Moreau and Joan Plowright) until it came out on cassette last year, when I found it disappointing. But I read the novel avidly, very much enjoying its astringent wit, clever narrative framework, and jaundiced view of human nature.

I went looking for more of Ellis's fiction, but to no avail. It is not easy to get in the States. Then, one day as I was perusing the English weekly newspaper the *Catholic Herald* (*Commonweal* exchanges subscriptions with the *Herald*), I discovered Ellis in her even more ferocious incarnation as a columnist. The verbal energy and stark moral landscape were once again manifest ("I prefer God to man"), along with a brassy reactionary take on Vatican II ("twaddle"), the modern world, and the host of allegedly mealymouthed bishops who have allowed rank heresy to flourish. All the usual suspects, in other words. Nevertheless, Ellis is compulsive reading, even when she is dishing out patent nonsense—or maybe especially when her irreverence about our loss of reverence reaches fever pitch.

Serpent on the Rock: A Personal View of Christianity is the record of Ellis's "quest" to discover what has gone wrong with the Catholic church. Personal is the crucial word, especially when she is eviscerating feminists and charismatics, the views of New Age doyen Matthew Fox, or the late archbishop Derek Worlock of her native Liverpool, who avoided tangling with her in any official capacity. As best I can tell, the bishop made a prudent decision. (In fact, in May Ellis criticized Worlock following his death, and the *Herald* discontinued her column.)

Personal also covers the charm of Ellis's passionate, and passionately opinionated attachment to Catholicism. "Teilhard de Chardin's vision of what is desirable," she writes after quoting the cosmologically adventurous Jesuit at his most orotund, "also sounds to me very like my own vision of Hell. If I didn't believe in God I should find the world insupportable and see no reason not to hang myself." And make no mistake about it, Ellis believes in Hell as well as in the devil and especially in clerical garb and the Latin Mass. When at her best, she can make you believe too. (Well, not in her version of a nefarious, Masonically orchestrated Second Vatican Council, but certainly in her fierce devotion to a God who must first be feared and worshiped before he—and He's definitely a he—is approached.)

We learn that Ellis is not only the author of eleven novels and a handful of other books, but was a "carefree" postulant in a religious order in the 1950s (honorable medical discharge), and is the mother of seven, one of whom died in infancy and another at nineteen. Her description of the ineradicable nature of grief and loss is utterly persuasive, as is her matter-of-fact acceptance of the self-sacrifice motherhood demands. Life's injustices are something one learns to live with; violations of liturgical rubrics are not. Her wry views about sex as the world's most overrated pleasure are very amusing, and not unconnected to her dismissal of men as a species of dithering idiots whose fragile egos are matched only by their tiresome sexual ambitions (*see, The Summer House*). This disdain for men (a Victorian period piece, really) dovetails nicely with Ellis's virulent loathing of feminism. She is a champion, though an irascible one, of domesticity, or cooking and what she calls "the washing up." The teleology of life and love is chores, she cautions, and we have no rest from them until we rest in Him.

Though Ellis can be withering ("Luther, who was...more than a little nuts"), one of the surprises of this book is how earnest she is in presenting the views of those she often caricatures. The late journalist Peter Hebblethwaite and his wife Margaret are interviewed at length. Although she doesn't meet the arguments of "liberals" in any substantive fashion ("I can't see it myself," she will respond), from time to time she allows Hebblethwaite and others to complicate the picture.

Serpent on the Rock has many good moments ("It is futile to make happiness a goal: it is always and only a by-product"), and Ellis is rarely less than engaging as a "quest" companion. But this is a quest that righteously ends up where it began, and thereby lacks the dramatic tension the author is so good at providing in her fiction. "I am no historian, either," Ellis writes before issuing her most damning indictments, "but I subscribe to a theory which holds that the Reformation was the first in a series of loosely related calamities, leading to the Enlightenment, the French Revolution," etc., right down to the "shopping-mall mentality" of today.

Indeed, Ellis subscribes to a great many loosely related and calamitous theories, most of them, it must be said, pure fictions. That is not surprising, or necessarily a fatal flaw, in a writer of such vibrant moral imagination and sure dramatic instinct. However, in making this journey the reader has to remember where the stage ends and the orchestra pit begins...somewhere, it seems, around the Reformation. □

Paul Baumann *is associate editor of* Commonweal.

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THE COST OF VICTORY

In the Shadow of War
The United States Since the 1930s
Michael S. Sherry
Yale University Press, $35, 567 pp.

R. Scott Appleby

In his 1958 State of the Union Address, President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned that Americans "could make no more tragic mistake than merely to concentrate on military strength" in their global struggle against communism. "What makes the Soviet threat unique in history is its all-inclusiveness," Ike explained. "Every human activity is pressed into service as a weapon of expansion. Trade, economic development, military power, arts, science, education, the whole world of ideas—all are harnessed to this same chariot of expansion."

Alarmed at perceiving a similar dynamic at work in the United States, which had been "compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions," the war hero who had ridden his glistening military record into the White House issued a final warning two days before leaving office in 1961. In that famous farewell speech Eisenhower described his fear of "the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex." Militarization was a potentially boundless process, he believed, capable of consuming the nation's best minds, squandering its precious natural resources, dominating its political and economic agenda, flattening its social diversity, and confining public-policy decisions to a scientific-technological elite—capable, in short, of eroding the democratic foundations that set the United States apart from its totalitarian cold-war enemy.

In the Shadow of War, Michael Sherry's compelling history of U.S. militarization since the Great Depression, can be read as an extensive meditation and commentary upon this rare presidential expression of doubt in the wisdom of subordinating all other worthy claims on American resourcefulness to the hyperbolic imperatives of national security. In the end, Sherry's comprehensive overview suggests, America's militarization avoided the totalizing, single-minded course associated with Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, or the Stalinist Soviet Union. U.S. democratic institutions and civil society were too well developed to permit total control—or even, at times, coherent direction—to be exercised from the top. Militarization was the tool rather than the objective of diverse interests, Sherry writes, and thus it followed a "peculiarly ragged, quixotic course."

Defining militarization sweepingly as "the process by which war and national security became consuming anxieties and provided the memories, models, and metaphors that shaped broad areas of national life" allows Sherry, a professor of history at Northwestern University, to explore its cultural and social as well as its political and military aspects. Thus he examines the role of popular culture—including American movies, best-selling novels, advertising, and lifestyle trends—in reflecting and shaping national attitudes about war and preparedness for war in each of nine discrete phases of the overarching period from 1933 to 1995; and he similarly explores the implications militarization held for women, African-Americans, homosexuals, and other marginalized social groups.

On occasion the author, in his desire to be inclusive and overcome what he sees as the limitations of traditional military and diplomatic history, overstates the reach of militarization and thus weakens his central thesis about its diffuse character, as when he argues that "the nation's ecology, economy, politics, cultural life, and social relations—everything that defines a nation—became annexed to this historical process." Characteristically, however, Sherry offers balanced judgments and nuanced interpretations of the mounds of evidence he has compiled from copious secondary sources and supplemental primary documents.

In discussing the situation of African-Americans, for example, Sherry demon-

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strates that advances in civil rights during the period from the New Deal to the mid-1960s were legitimated not by the self-evident demands of social justice but largely by arguments based on national security considerations. Embarrassing reports of systematic racial discrimination and riots in the United States, one such argument ran, would hand the Soviets a useful propaganda victory in the global competition for the allegiance of developing post-colonial nations (with their own vivid memories of repressive Western regimes). Or, as FDR put it in announcing his 1941 executive order barring racial discrimination by employers and labor unions engaged in defense business, a nation facing totalitarianism needed all its workers and sought to strengthen its "unity and morale by refuting at home the very theories which we are fighting abroad." Only when Martin Luther King, Jr., emerged to lead the civil rights movement in the '60s were cold-war imperatives displaced—and discredited—by outright moral claims.

Among the social and cultural forces shaping America within the paradigm of militarization, religion receives relatively short shrift. Unlike the treatment of women, blacks, and gays, consistent attention is given to religion's role and fate in the process of militarization only for the most recent period, and then with disproportionate emphasis on the New Religious Right and its baptism of "culture wars" ideology.

For all his awareness of social diversity and the call to "decenter" American history, Sherry chooses to organize his narrative around a rather traditional theme: the growth of the national state and the political culture which usually served and sometimes thwarted its ambitions. He is most authoritative when describing political calculations and military operations; the opening chapters, on the ways FDR used the memory of World War I to help sell the New Deal, and the New Deal to sell the notion of an activist state and mobilize the nation for entry into World War II, are particularly masterly. Indeed, they demonstrate a major theme of the book: militarization preceded and shaped the cold war, not vice-versa.

Significantly, the appeal to World War II as the model for comprehensive militarization backfired during the Kennedy-Johnson years, when the traumatic experience of Vietnam painfully dismantled the assumption of American invincibility (and unqualified virtue) that had been sustained even throughout the Korean conflict. By the midsixties, with the nation internally divided along class, gender, racial (and religious) lines, and militarization no longer capable of stimulating economic prosperity at home and justifying American interventionism abroad, the patriotic canopy collapsed and the nation plunged into a dismal era of soul-searching, failed presidencies, and identity politics.

After fifteen years of disenchantment, the Reagan era, Sherry argues, was not so much "morning in America" as a twilight reverie on the good old days of American innocence and undisputed military might; the resulting arms build-up was an expensive stroll down memory lane, however, which made Americans feel good about themselves again but left them with a swollen deficit that threatened to undermine the nation's economic security. The glory days did not return for long: the unifying effects of both cold and hot wars proved transient, as Bush's defeat after the stunning Gulf War victory demonstrated.

If militarization has failed to provide the present generation of Americans with a sense of shared purpose and identity, it also served for earlier generations as a vehicle for limited social reform, sustained periods of economic growth, and concerted national action on a variety of fronts not directly linked to warmaking. Indeed, Sherry argues in summarizing the complex themes of this remarkable book, "the most persistent impulse behind militarization was its leaders' and citizens' inability to trust and justify collective national action except when it occurred in war or in a war-like mode." The search for a suitable alternative continues. □

R. Scott Appleby *teaches history and directs the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

rated brethren when they contemplate Christian unity in the context of a Catholic church in which so many important decisions are made in secret by a nameless, faceless Roman curia. Archbishop Quinn is an answer to our prayers for steps toward making closer union possible.

JOHN SHEEHAN
Tampa, Fla.

Pass it on

I'd like to suggest a means of expanding the readership of *Commonweal*. A loyal reader who recognizes that a particular article may be of interest to a friend will serve the cause by sending a copy of the piece to the friend, along with subscription information (for example, the insert folded into each copy).

It works. John Garvey's column on Walter M. Miller, Jr. [*"A Canticle for Leibowitz,"* April 5] has garnered you another subscriber; I'm sending copies of Mary Douglas's "A Modest Proposal" [June 14] to two other friends. Keep up the good work!

JEROME WOLBERT
Chicago, Ill.

From the editors: You too!

The veto was wrong

In a letter you published [Correspondence, June 14] one of the women who appeared at a press conference supporting President Bill Clinton's veto of legislation that would have banned partial-birth abortions explained her support of the president in terms of her personal experience. Out of my own personal experience, I am convinced that women and their families are tragically misled when they are informed that partial-birth abortion is their only option. I am also convinced that Mr. Clinton shamelessly used five women and their families to support his veto of the bill.

I believe many more women and their families would choose to give birth to their fatally ill babies and love and care for them for as long as their short meaningful lives might endure

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if they were fully informed that they could let their babies live rather than aborting them.

Dr. James McMahon, who performed the partial-birth abortions on all five of the women surrounding President Clinton at his press conference, would have targeted our son Gerard because he had Trisomy 18, a chromosomal abnormality incompatible with more than a few hours or weeks of life outside the uterus.

My husband, a pediatric neurologist, and I, a pediatric nurse, married when we were 37 and 30 respectively. We prayed that we would have a large family and knew that we had a limited number of childbearing years. We were delighted to conceive one month after our marriage.

My husband and I learned via a routine sonogram halfway through our first pregnancy that our baby had a large abdominal defect. Our obstetrician suggested an amniocentesis to learn whether our son had Trisomy 18, since abdominal defects this large are frequently associated with Trisomy 18. If he did not have Trisomy 18, we would begin to research our son's need for abdominal surgery and to find the best pediatric surgeon available to us. The procedure brought the diagnosis we feared, so that the second half of the pregnancy was emotionally very painful. I felt that perhaps our hope of having a large family was dying with Gerard.

We had a supportive obstetrician, and at each visit we also met with the OB clinical nurse specialist. She helped us with our grief, and helped us plan for Gerard's birth and death. The neonatologist told us what to expect about Gerard's condition, and we let him know that we didn't want our child to undergo any painful procedures.

Never once did we consider abortion. We prayed that our beloved child would be born alive and live for at least a brief time. My husband and I were drawn very close as we comforted each other. At forty weeks our OB decided that he would induce labor, since Gerard had had the benefit of full-term development and had the best chance of living at least briefly.

On the eve of the second day of induction, Gerard was delivered alive. He was placed on my chest after the neonatologist examined him, and we then held him and gently talked to him. The priest who had married us ten months earlier was there to baptize him. Gerard's lungs and heart were weak and his vital signs slowed until he died forty-five minutes after we met him. The beautiful pictures we took of him are among our most cherished possessions. At the funeral home three days later we were able to hold him again. He was buried in a tiny white coffin next to his grandparents and great-grandparents. We have been blessed with five more children, all healthy (No. 6 weighed in at 11.5 pounds, leading the hospital staff to marvel at how easily I delivered her). President Clinton's claim—"They rip your body to shreds and you could never have another baby, even though

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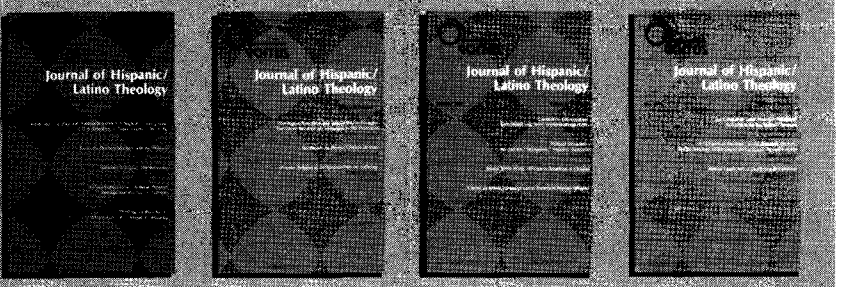
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the baby you were carrying couldn't live"—is patently false.

Our children have internalized our love and respect for Gerard, for all babies, and for persons with disabilities. Every August 2 we celebrate Gerard's birthday and his brief but important life with a birthday cake, a visit to his grave, and a trip to Chucky Cheese's ("because," our kids are convinced, "Gerard would love it!").

We have never had any regrets about carrying Gerard to term, giving birth to him, and loving him until he died naturally. In fact it is the event that I am most proud of in my life. My hope is that since there is no medical reason to undergo a partial-birth abortion, each woman will listen to her heart and follow her strong wish to protect and love her child until death comes naturally.

MARGARET SHERIDAN
Chevy Chase, Md.

From a far park bench

What a pleasure it was to get your issue of April 19, and the page of letters in the issue of May 17. Thanks very much for doing it and sending it. Ordinarily *Commonweal* gets here by dolphin-post (the January 26 issue arrived July 10). It's really my major contact with the outside world (well, you and the BBC). I think of you all often, remembering the old days. And hearing from you now brings cheer to my heart (on this park bench in the Aegean).

BOB LAX
Patmos

Editors' note: The writer refers to James Uebbing's April 19 article, "The Poet [Robert Lax] Who Fell off the Map."

Where are the homes?

Ed Marciniak's article ["More than a Roof: Promising Moves in Public Housing," June 1] seems to be based on the assumption that our economy provides enough jobs to make it possible for everyone to afford private-sector housing. The author portrays public housing tenants as jobless, dysfunctional households who can, with help, move from dependency on public largesse to self-sufficiency. Clearly, some public-housing families need the support services Marciniak celebrates, but we need to keep in mind the ongoing shortage of affordable housing that public housing was created to address.

Perhaps the notorious towers of the Chicago Housing Authority have made it a landlord of last resort. That is not the case everywhere. As a tenant attorney in New York, I have represented working parents as well as families on public assistance, all residing in New York City Housing Authority apartments. Although the explosive rise in homelessness has led to a disproportionate number of jobless single-parent households in public housing, the program was not created exclusively for "the poorest of the urban poor," but also for working families and elderly and/or disabled persons who could not find adequate housing in the private sector; all these groups remain part of public housing's constituency.

The report issued by HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros, cited by Mr. Marciniak, states that "the supply of affordable housing units falls well short of the demand—by about 4.7 million units." In New York State, the market rent for a two-bedroom apartment is 271 percent of the poverty-level total income for a family of three. Given the decline in real wages for many American workers and the continuing inability of the private sector to provide housing that is "decent, safe, and sanitary"—and affordable for all Americans—the diminution of the public housing stock is cause for mourning, not rejoicing.

MARY ELLEN BURNS, A.S.C.J.
New York, N.Y.

The writer is staff attorney in the legal services office of Covenant House.

The writer replies:

My article was not about the pros and cons of public housing. Mary Ellen Burns's concern should be addressed to Henry G. Cisneros, secretary of Housing and Urban Development (which is scheduled to demolish 100,000 vacant or "distressed" housing units).

I focused, rather, on the importance of finding better ways to mainstream the urban poor who receive a public or private subsidy, a topic I am ready to discuss.

ED MARCINIAK

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'WAITER!'

Michael Varga

At the age of forty, I recently took early retirement from the U.S. Foreign Service because of serious medical problems. With more time on my hands and intimations of mortality at every turn, a character from my past came to me, a cancer-stricken man named Jerome.

Many years ago, as a Jesuit novice, I worked as an orderly at Calvary Cancer Hospital in the Bronx, New York, where I cared for terminally ill patients. I quickly discovered that it is not easy to give a bed bath to someone who is so fragile and weak. My very first patient was Jerome Bowers (not his real name). He had spent his entire adult life as the maître d' at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. He was deathly thin, and his skin had a yellow pallor. Bathing him was not pleasant.

The first morning I came into the room, he got very nervous and said he didn't have time to wash. The lunch crowd would be here soon and the tables were not set. This was all a puzzle to me, so I washed him as best I could, said little, and went on to the next patient.

The next day when I arrived, Mr. Bowers signaled me and said, "Tell Jerome that time is running out. The tables must be done now."

"Which Jerome?" I asked.

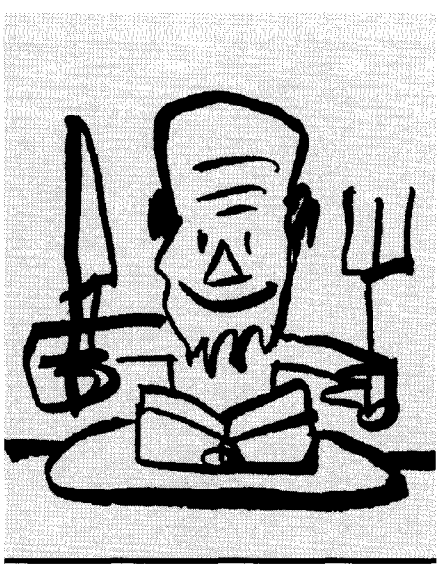
"The maître d'! Go, tell him!" "I'll tell him later," I said, but as I started to bathe Mr. Bowers I could tell he was panicking. I decided to explain: "Your name is Jerome Bowers, mine is Michael. You're here in Calvary Hospital because you have cancer. Don't worry about the lunch tables. They're not your concern anymore. Just lie back and let me wash you." This didn't allay his panic, so I finished quickly and went on to my other patients.

The next day, as soon as Mr. Bowers spied me, he started yelling, "Jerome, get to work. Get the silverware out, and make sure the tablecloths have been changed." This was quite a change from the first day. Now, I was Jerome. "My name is not Jerome," I said, "*your* name is Jerome. I'm here to wash you, not worry about the silverware." But he kept asking if the lunch crowd was in yet and if we had run out of the daily special.

After tussling with Mr. Bowers this way for over a week, I finally saw the light: Jerome Bowers was dying, abandoned by his family, and I was the only person having human contact with him on a regular basis. Why was I insisting on turning this one daily encounter into some sort of argumentative wrestling match? What was the point?

So, when I went to wash him the next day and he called me Jerome and asked about the lunch crowd, I answered, "Yes, we've got a few couples at tables fourteen and twenty-two. The tablecloths were all changed by 10:30, and all the silverware is out."

Mr. Bowers relaxed, folded his hands on his chest, and started humming an old German song. I washed him easily, shaved him without a nick, and together we jabbered about the daily special: French onion soup, a lean slice of roast beef with vegetables *au jus*. He was at ease. For once, the panicked fever was gone, he enjoyed the bath, and I found fun in the role-playing.



Every day for the next month we did the same thing. I was Jerome, reporting on how well the lunch crowd was being served, how many of the reservations had already shown up, how quickly the dishwashers were working, etc. And he was at peace. As the days passed and his physical condition deteriorated, the doctors increased his morphine dosage and he gradually grew less lucid. And at the end, he could utter only a few words.

I was with him the day he died. By then, he wasn't able to speak. He held up a fork from his luncheon tray, as if to say, "Is all the silverware out?" and I signaled back that all was OK. He put the fork down, nodded his head, and as I wiped his face, he died.

As I get ready now for my own end-times, I realize that the important thing is not the labels we attach to reality but our response to it. In my encounter with Jerome Bowers, it wasn't important whether he called me Michael or Jerome, or whether he thought he was at the Waldorf. What mattered was how I responded to him. The fact that he keeps appearing to me now seemed bizarre at first: Of all the people I have known in life, why would one I'd long ago stopped thinking about reappear? Gradually I realized that what Jerome Bowers had taught me years ago I had forgotten: We are constantly called to step beyond the definitions, categories, and identities to which we are accustomed. When we do, a new creation can be born. □

Michael Varga *is an author and playwright who lives in Cape May, New Jersey.*

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